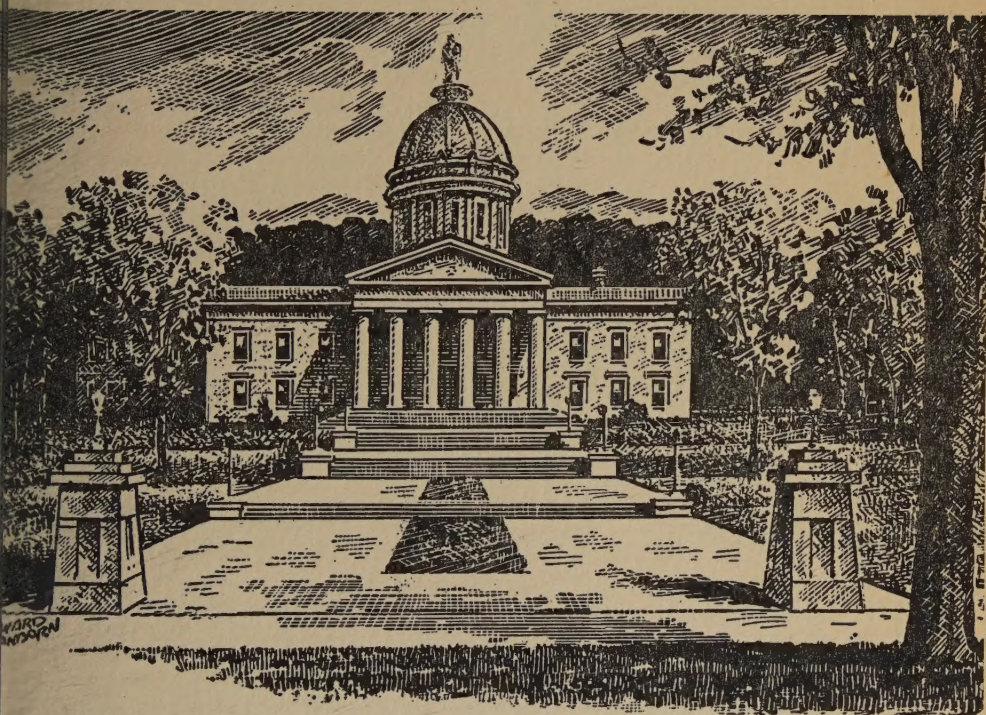


# VERMONT *Quarterly*



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# VERMONT *Quarterly*

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July 1951

The PROCEEDINGS of the  
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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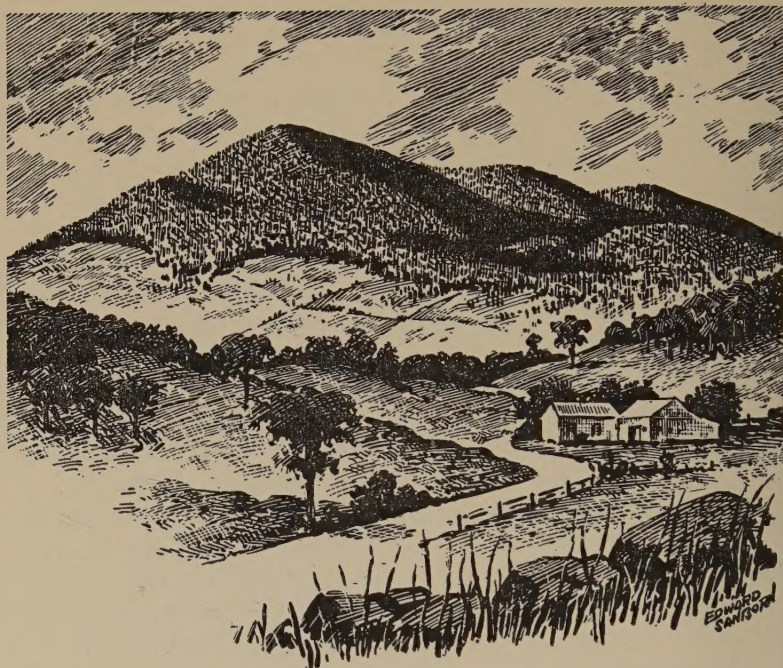
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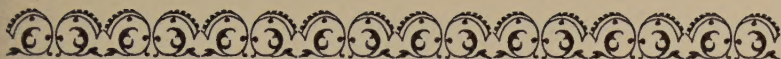


### MOUNT EQUINOX

I could not look upon the peaks of Ascutney, Killington, Mansfield and Equinox without being moved in a way that no other scene could move me. It was here that I first saw the light of day; here I received my bride; here my dead lie pillowed on the loving breast of our everlasting hills.

From the *Address at Bennington*, September 21, 1927,  
by Calvin Coolidge





## THE BATTLE OF VALCOUR ISLAND

By WILLIAM R. FOLSOM

*The naval action at Valcour Island holds abiding interest for many reasons, and some of the reasons are evident in this informal paper by Mr. Folsom. The treatment of the theme seems to us to develop certain details more effectively and vividly than other studies of the battle that changed the course of history in the Champlain Valley. Editor.*

WHEN the thirteen American Colonies, driven to desperation by the oppressive laws and trade regulations of the British Empire, decided, at last, to throw off their allegiance to royal authority and enter upon the most radical experiment in the science of government the world had ever known, His Royal Highness, George the Third, looked upon this proceeding with much the same horror that we would display today should the United States suddenly decide to adopt the principles of Communism. Subjects of the British Crown had obeyed its laws from time immemorial without question, and belief in the Divine Right of Kings had never been challenged; it just was not done, presumably from motives of personal prudence and a praiseworthy intention of keeping outside the Tower.

The old Hanoverian King, therefore, decided to put down this uprising in America without delay.

*Immediately the question arose:  
How was this to be done?*

Of course, British troops could be landed almost anywhere along the Atlantic Coast under cover of the guns of the Royal Navy, but any attempt to march into and subdue the interior was beset with difficulties. North America was a large piece of ground; cities and towns in the interior were widely separated; communication between them was by means of rough, narrow, stump-filled roads, or ancient Indian trails. How could the artillery, ammunition and supplies, necessary for an army, be transported through such a wilderness? British troops—you will recall—occupied the rebellious Port of Boston, but their two attempts to get into the interior failed. Once they penetrated as far as Concord Bridge, at another time to Bunker

Hill, but both these places—it is obvious—are no great distance from Boston.

There was just one way: the ancient route of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River—the back-door waterway leading to the very heart of New England, a method of approach frequently used by Canadian and Indian war parties in the old French Wars.

British troops could be carried across the ocean in transports and up the St. Lawrence to Montreal; from Montreal in flatboats up the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain; up Lake Champlain to its southern end, whence a land march of only twenty miles would bring an invading army to navigable water on the Hudson River and so to Albany and New York. Bases could be established along this route, and New England, thus cut off from the other Colonies, could be attacked on all sides, overrun and conquered.

To make this scheme effective, a strong British fleet on Lake Champlain would be necessary to protect the long line of supply.

In the Fall of 1775, Col. Benedict Arnold, commanding selected detachments of General Washington's army, made his memorable journey through the wilderness of northern Maine—the most heroic march in the history of America—and attacked Quebec. How an army of less than a thousand men with a few pop-gun cannon could have been expected to capture the most formidable walled fortress in America is beyond imagination. Due, however, to the courage and indomitable resolution of Benedict Arnold, the attack came within an eyelash of success. The assaulting column actually got into the city and the fate of Quebec trembled in the balance when Col. Arnold was shot down with a musket ball through his leg. Disheartened by the loss of their leader, his men were finally driven out of the city.

With the opening of navigation in the spring of 1776 a powerful British and Hessian army arrived from England, and Arnold was compelled to retreat to Lake Champlain, where his ragged, starving army found shelter behind the guns of Fort Ticonderoga.

At this point the story of the "Philadelphia" begins:

## I

"The Philadelphia," said Benedict Arnold in his official report of the naval battle off Valcour Island in Lake Champlain in 1776 "was hulled in so many places that she sank about one hour after the engagement was over."

In August, 1935, one hundred and fifty-nine years after these



words were written, the "Philadelphia" was brought up from the bottom of Lake Champlain. When the tip of her thirty-five-foot mast broke the surface of the water, a cheer went up from the surrounding craft. Under the direction of the two splendid young men who were carrying on the work of raising the ship, the lifting operations were halted while a seaman fastened to the masthead a replica of the colonial flag which the "Philadelphia" had flown during the battle. The familiar stripes were there, but in place of the stars appeared the Cross of St. George.

After a salute, fired in honor of the men who died in the battle, the crane once more took up its work. Slowly, foot by foot, the mast appeared, then the hand-hewed stem, and, lastly, the hull itself.

When the "Philadelphia," like a ghost of the past, once more rode the waters of Lake Champlain, one's first impression was that of unqualified amazement: the vessel was no jumbled mass of rotted planks and skeleton ribs. The passage of more than a century and a half had wrought surprisingly little change in her outward appearance. Her mast stood up as straight and true as on the hot summer day it was stepped; the heavy oak planks of her sides and deck were still in place.

Amazement was succeeded by an overwhelming feeling of pride in the courage of the men who dared go out and do battle with the "Mistress of the Seas" in a ship so pitifully small.

Fifty-four feet long, with a beam of fifteen feet (about the dimensions of a medium-sized pleasure yacht), the "Philadelphia," in the official list of ships sent by General Horatio Gates to the Continental Congress, was rated as "Gondola," carrying three guns and a crew of forty-five men, Captain Reed commanding.

It is difficult to comprehend how forty-five men on a fifty-four-foot ship could handle the vessel, point and fire her three heavy guns without delay and confusion; possibly the explanation can be found in a letter from General Arnold to General Gates, written from Isle La Motte in Lake Champlain three weeks before the battle: "We are," he observes, "upwards of one hundred men short of our complement."

When the hull of the "Philadelphia" was free of water and slime, a forward deck appeared, running from the bow to the mast amidship, some two feet below the gunwales of the ship. Two wooden rails ran aft from the bow along this deck a distance of some fifteen feet, forming a runway to take up the recoil of the bow gun; parts of the gun carriage for this gun were still in place on this runway.

On each side of the forward deck was a wooden rail or shelf with circular holes spaced along it. These were receptacles for round shot to prevent the balls from rolling about the deck in heavy weather. A few cannon balls were found in place on these racks.

Within the hull were found the sloop's three guns, a human arm bone, a powder horn, muskets, bayonets, cannon balls, and the two sections of an hour-glass. In this connection it is interesting to note that one of Arnold's requisitions for supplies contains these items: "ten sets of colors, two dozen dark lanthorns, fifty half hour glasses."

A bar shot protruded from the muzzle of the bow gun—a twelve-pounder. It is possible that the ship sank before this shot could be rammed home—mute evidence that the crew of the "Philadelphia" worked their guns to the very end.

The other two guns, "nine-pounders," were found, one on top of the other. One of them contained three wads, a cannon ball, and a canister of grape shot. The position of these guns indicated that possibly they had been lashed in that position in a last, desperate attempt to get them off the sinking ship.

In all likelihood some of the guns on this first American battle fleet came from the old French fortress of Ticonderoga, which had been surrendered in May the preceding year to Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold. "There is," writes Arnold from Isle La Motte, "a small brass Royal at Ty, which with a hundred shells and a gunner may be very useful to us."

Under the inspiration of a driving, dynamic personality, the ragged, half-starved men aboard these vessels, many of them not sailors at all, but soldiers, ("the Marines the refuse of every Reg't and the seamen, few of them ever wet with salt water," complains Arnold bitterly) learned how to work their ships and point their guns.

Under the influence of a brilliant strategist whose headlong courage took the place of drill and discipline, these men learned how to fight—and also how to die.

The thing for which these men fought and died was no concrete thing—nothing objective—nothing to be touched with human hands. The thing for which these men gave their lives was a vision, a dream of idealism—taking form, years after these men and these ships had been forgotten, in the United States of America.

All this comes back to us when a ghost ship rises from the depths of the sea.



## II

On the third of July, 1776,—the day before the immortal Declaration of Independence—the remains of the American army, which, under the leadership of Benedict Arnold, had attempted the conquest of Canada the year before, reached a semblance of safety behind the fire-blackened walls of Crown Point on Lake Champlain. The survivors, defeated and disheartened, weak from starvation and sickness, could go no farther. "I went with General Schuyler and General Arnold to Crown Point," writes General Gates to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, "where we found the wretched remains of what was a very respectable body of troops. That pestilential disease, the smallpox, has taken such deep root that the Camp had more the appearance of a General Hospital than an army."

The retreat of its army left the Colonies open to invasion by the ancient route of Lake Champlain. Those who knew the energy and ability of Sir Guy Carleton, the Governor of Canada, had little doubt that he would soon appear on the Lake, at the head of a powerful force of British and Hessian troops, which at the opening of navigation had arrived from England.

General Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold, the hero of the Canadian Expedition and now a Brigadier General, were ordered to Crown Point, the former to take command of the army, the latter, on the recommendation of General Washington, to undertake the construction and equipment of a fleet of vessels with which he was, if possible, to maintain control of the Lake.

Lake Champlain was of paramount importance in the coming campaign. To transport an army through the wilderness which lay between Canada and New England was practically impossible; there were no roads worth the name. Lake Champlain, however, offered an easy way for the passage of an army, provided a strong British fleet led the advance to sweep away all opposition.

The immediate problem facing Benedict Arnold was to construct a fleet out of the forest which bordered the Lake, equip it with guns and furnish it with supplies, both of which must be transported to this distant base in the wilderness. Back of him he had the feeble resources of the Colonies, jealous of one another and concerned, unduly perhaps, with their own local interests. In front of him he had Sir Guy Carleton with the wealth and power of the British Empire at his back. From the British warships off Quebec the

Canadian Governor could draw as many trained seamen and gunners as his own vessels might require.

Skenesborough (the present Whitehall) at the extreme southern end of the Lake, was selected by Arnold as a base, for the guns of Fort Ticonderoga protected him from attack by water. Trees were cut in the nearby woods, and from them came the frame and planking for the ships. These were put together by such shipwrights and carpenters as had survived or escaped the ravages of fever and small-pox. "I never saw so much fever and ague in my life," writes General Waterbury, commanding the galley "Washington," "as there is at this post. There are very few carpenters fit for duty."

In the midst of delays, disappointments and a general scarcity of everything, except enduring courage, the fleet grew into being. Throughout the long days of early summer Benedict Arnold drove his men to their work with all the energy of his forceful personality. Haste was necessary, for it was of vital importance that his ships should take the water in advance of the British fleet in order that he might train his raw crews in the management of their guns and sails, make them familiar with life on the water, and select a position for the coming battle.

The mast of the "Philadelphia" is graphic evidence of this urgent need of speed; a slender tree, cut down in the nearby woods, and set up in such hurry that the stubs of its branches still remain.

Men weak from fever and dysentery carried down the thick oak planks to the lake shore. Hands trembling from fever and ague drove home the crude, hand-wrought spikes which fastened these planks to the "Philadelphia's" ribs.

### III

There were fifteen vessels in all: three schooners, the "Royal Savage," presumably a reference to His Royal Highness, George the Third, the "Revenge" and the "Liberty." There was one sloop, the "Enterprise." The other craft were listed as *galleys* and *gondolas*; the gondolas being flat-bottomed and propelled by both oars and sail. The galleys were rigged in similar manner, but were larger and built with keels.

By the middle of August the little American flotilla was ready, in some measure, for service. Its commander, although still suffering from his wound received in the assault on Quebec, was occupied with last-minute details.

"I arrived here (Crown Point) at ten o'clock at night," writes



General Arnold to General Gates, "a little feverish, but no ague fit. I don't think it prudent to go without a surgeon. The surgeon mate of Col. St. Clair's regiment has a good box of instruments and will incline to go with the fleet. I wish he could be sent here, or some other, who will answer to kill a man *secundum artem*. I can procure a case of capital instruments here. Nothing but the surgeon and some few articles prevents our proceeding."

Presumably the army surgeon was ordered to join the expedition, for on the twentieth of August, 1776, Arnold sailed from Crown Point with twelve vessels, carrying sixty-five guns and five hundred and forty-four men. General Waterbury remained at Skenesborough to finish the three large galleys: "Trumbull," "Washington," and "Congress."

The rank and file of the Continental Army were not all pure-souled patriots. Among them, as in all wars, were weak men, timid men, men without principle, petty grafters, but those men who sailed with Benedict Arnold to Valcour Island were men of whom any country might be proud.

#### IV

"I have sent two boats to sound around the Island Valcour," writes Arnold to Gates, "who report that it is an exceeding fine and secure harbor. I am determined to go there the first fair wind, as the fleet will be secure—the men are daily trained to the exercise of their guns and if powder was plenty, I could wish to have them fire with their great guns often; at present, we cannot afford it."

Toward the last of September, General Arnold brought the fleet into the narrow channel between Valcour Island and the western shore of the lake. "We are moored in a small bay," he informs General Gates, "on the West side of the Island as near together as possible and in such form that few vessels can attack us at the same time and those will be exposed to the fire of the whole fleet."

On October first he writes from Valcour Island:

"Last night the Trumbull Galley arrived here, a considerable addition to our fleet, but not half furnished or rigged; her cannon are all too small—Great part of my seamen and marines are almost naked. The weather has been very severe here for some time—."

The day before the battle (October 10th) Arnold again writes to General Gates:

"The clothing which is arrived is sufficient supply of its kind. We are victualled for about 10 days. We cannot at present determine

how long it will be requisite to remain here. I have received no late intelligence from the Northward. The loss of two small canoes (all we had) has prevented my sending out small parties.

"P. S. If you have read Dr. Price's pamphlet (sent you by Mr. Franklin) I will take the loan of it as a favor."

Benedict Arnold was destined not to read the article on liberty from the pen of the distinguished Dr. Price, for the "Royal Savage" with Arnold in command, cruising off Valcour Island in the early morning of October 11th, sighted the British fleet coming up the lake, favored by a strong northeast wind. On the quarter deck of the "Maria," the British flagship, and named in honor of his wife, Lady Maria, stood Sir Guy Carleton, commander of the British army. By his side was Captain Thomas Pringle of the Royal Navy, commander of the battleship "Lord Howe," and recently appointed to the command of the British fleet on Lake Champlain. In close company with the "Maria" were the schooners "Inflexible" and "Carleton," both superior in speed and guns to any vessel in the American flotilla, the "Inflexible" being a vessel of three hundred tons burden. Behind these ships came the "Radeau," a flat-bottomed craft of fourteen guns and capable of carrying three hundred men. Bringing up the rear were twenty gunboats, the gondola "Loyal Convert," and four long boats, the entire fleet comprising twenty-nine vessels, mounting ninety-one guns and manned by six hundred and seventy picked seamen and gunners of the Royal Navy.

With this formidable armament bearing down upon him, General Arnold could look forward with some confidence to a speedy and complete defeat.

## V

With sound judgment Benedict Arnold had elected to hold his inferior vessels in the small bay on the western shore of the Island.

Valcour Island lies about three-fourths of a mile off the New York shore of the Lake. From its west side a point juts out into the channel. The American ships lay behind this point. Their formation, as the British officers termed it, was that of a half moon, the line of battle extending completely across the channel, thus preventing the British ships from turning either flank.

In this narrow channel the British ships would find it practically impossible to maneuver in battle formation and impossible to stand off and hammer the rebel fleet to pieces at long range. In this narrow place Benedict Arnold had wisely foreseen that his short range guns



could be employed with maximum effect. Other advantages of Arnold's position were obvious; his fleet could strike the enemy in the flank on his passage up the Lake.

If the British discovered the American position and entered the Valcour channel from the north, two ledges of rock in that area might damage their deep-draft ships. Valcour Island, however, is low and lies so close to the western shore that the narrow channel between them is not easily seen.

Should the British attack be made through the southern entrance to the channel, the prevailing winds would compel their large ships to tack up this confined passage one or two at a time, which is precisely what happened.

## VI

The "Royal Savage," standing off and on to observe the approaching enemy, came under the fire of the powerful "Inflexible." In attempting to return to the fleet, the American schooner was forced to make short tacks against the wind. Just as she was nearing the southern point of the Island three balls from the heavy eighteen-pound guns of the "Inflexible" struck the ship.

"The schooner," says General Arnold in his official report, "by some bad management fell to leeward and was first attacked. One of her masts was wounded and her rigging shot away."

The schooner ran ashore. The crew, however, reached the Island in safety and made their way along the shore to the bay where the fleet lay in battle formation. The General transferred his flag to the galley "Congress," his most powerful vessel, and opened fire on the approaching British ships.

The "Inflexible" and "Carleton" slowly made their way into the channel, which they found to be a very unpleasant place. The "Carleton," as she came in toward the Island, was struck by a sudden squall from off the rocky cliffs which forced her toward the center of the half circle formed by Arnold's ships. Her young commander, Dacres, cleverly anchored his vessel with a spring on her cable so that he could turn his ship and bring her guns to bear on the opposing squadron. The "Maria" had run so far to the south that she was unable to get up in time to take part in the fight.

Meanwhile the "Carleton" was suffering from the concentrated fire: Lieutenant Dacres was badly wounded and unconscious, another officer had his arm shot off, and only one officer—a midshipman—remained on deck fit for duty. Captain Pringle, seeing the critical

situation of the schooner, signalled her to break off the action. The "Carleton," with several feet of water in her hold, was rapidly becoming helpless. Two gunboats got alongside and in spite of a hot fire from the entire fleet towed her out of range of the American guns.

"At half past twelve," says General Arnold in his report, "the engagement became general and very warm. Some of the enemy's ships and all their Gondolas beat and rowed up within musket shot of us."

"Close to one o'clock," says Captain Pausch, a Hessian artillery officer, commanding one of the British gunboats, "this naval battle began to get very serious. Lieutenant Dufrais came very near perishing with all his men, for a cannon ball from the enemy's guns going through his magazine, it blew up—at first, I could not tell what men were on board, but directly a chest went up into the air and, after the smoke had cleared away, I recognized the men by the cords around their hats."

As the hours went by and the short autumn afternoon drew to a close, the American vessels were seen to have suffered greatly from the heavy guns of the enemy, fired at close range.

"They continued a very hot fire with round and grape shot," reports General Arnold, "until five o'clock when they thought proper to retire to about six or seven hundred yards distance and continued the fire until dark."

"The 'Congress' and 'Washington' have suffered greatly; the latter lost her first Lieutenant killed, Captain and Master wounded. The 'New York' lost all her officers except the Captain."

"The 'Philadelphia' was hulled in so many places that she sunk about one hour after the engagement was over."

"The whole killed and wounded amounted to about sixty-nine."

"We suffered much for want of seamen and gunners."

"I was obliged, myself, to point most of the guns on board the 'Congress' which I believe did good execution."

"The 'Congress' received seven shots between wind and water, was hulled a dozen times, had her main mast wounded in two places and her yard in one."

"The 'Washington' was hulled a number of times, her main mast shot through. Both vessels are very leaky and want repairing."

"On consulting with General Waterbury and Col. Wigglesworth [*not sailors, you will observe, but officers in the Continental Army. W.R.F.*], it was thought prudent to return to Crown Point, every



vessel's ammunition being nearly three fourths spent and the enemy greatly superior to us in ships and men."

"On the whole, I think, we have had a very fortunate escape, and have great reason to return our humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God for preserving and delivering so many of us from our more than savage enemies.

I am, dear General,  
Your affectionate servant,  
B. Arnold."

## VII

The Council of War on board the "Congress" that October evening was brief. To escape, if possible, was the only thing left to do. Retreat was, however, full of difficulties. To attempt to sail northward around Valcour into the open Lake was impossible, for the damaged vessels could make no headway against the wind, which still held in the north. Off the southern end of the channel the British fleet lay in a semicircle to prevent a possible escape in that direction. One slender chance remained and the commanders decided to take it and make the dangerous attempt of stealing through the enemy's line under cover of darkness. Two things were in the Americans' favor: the night was foggy and obscure, and the wind still blew from the north. The details of the undertaking were looked after by General Arnold with his customary skill; the retreating ships must be kept in line or discovery was certain. Arnold solved the problem by placing a lantern on the stern of each vessel with the light so screened that it was visible only to the ship directly astern.

When it became quite dark, sail was made, sweeps were manned, and in this Indian file formation the crippled vessels bore down on the British line.

"At seven o'clock," reports General Arnold, "Col. Wigglesworth in the 'Trumbull' got under way. The Gondolas and small vessels followed and the 'Congress' and 'Washington' brought up the rear. The enemy did not molest us." "The retreat," says the British Lieutenant Hadden, "did great honor to General Arnold."

The fleet made exceedingly slow progress. During the night the wind shifted and the exhausted men labored at the sweeps to force the water-logged vessels against the wind. Daylight found the flotilla off Schuyler's Island, only ten miles south of Valcour. Arnold brought the fleet to anchor in the lee of the island, in order to make

such repairs as were possible before the British fleet should get within range.

"We remained no longer at Schuyler's Island," says General Arnold in his report to General Schuyler, "than to stop our leaks and mend the sails of the 'Washington'."

"At two P. M. we weighed anchor with a fresh breeze to the Southward."

"The enemy's fleet at the same time got under way."

"At six o'clock the next morning we were about off Willsborough—twenty-eight miles from Crown Point. The wind breezed up from the Southward so that we gained very little by beating or rowing. At the same time, the enemy took a fresh breeze from the North East and by the time we had reached Split Rock, were alongside of us." . . .

"The 'Washington' and 'Congress' were in the rear. The 'Washington' Galley was in such shattered condition and had so many men killed and wounded she struck to the enemy after receiving a few broadsides."

"We were then attacked in the 'Congress' Galley by a ship mounting 12 eighteen pounders, a schooner of 14 sixes—and one of 12 sixes,—two under our stern and one on our broadsides within musket shot. They kept up an incessant fire on us for about five glasses, with round and grape shot which we returned as briskly."

"The sails, rigging and hull of the 'Congress' were shattered and torn to pieces, the first Lieutenant and three men killed, when to prevent her falling into the enemy's hand, (who had seven sail around us) I ran her ashore in a small creek—ten miles from Crown Point—on the East side, where, after saving our small arms, I set her on fire with four Gondolas, with whose crews I reached Crown Point through the woods that evening and very luckily escaped the Savages, who waylaid the road in two hours after we passed."

"At four o'clock yesterday morning I reached this place (Ticonderoga) exceeding fatigued and unwell, having been without sleep or refreshment for near three days."

"It has pleased Providence," writes General Gates to General Schuyler, "to preserve General Arnold. Few men ever met with so many hairbreadth escapes in so short a space of time."

He might have added, with some justification, that few men have ever shown greater resourcefulness or greater courage than Benedict Arnold on the deck of the sinking 'Congress,' fighting like a wounded beast of prey the seven enemy ships surrounding him; face to face with defeat and always at his shoulder the pale figure of Death.



## VIII

Out of the fifteen American vessels, ten were lost. The killed and wounded amounted to over eighty (twenty-five per cent of this number being on board the "Congress"). General Waterbury and one hundred and ten men were captured, and the remainder of the crews escaped from their ships.

"The little American Navy," says a distinguished authority, Admiral Mahan, "was wiped out, but, never had any force, big or small, lived to better purpose or died more gloriously.

"Considering its raw material, the recency of its organization, words can scarcely express the heroism of the resistance, which undoubtedly depended upon the personal military qualities of the leader."

The campaign as a whole was, however, a triumphant vindication of Arnold's strategy. Benedict Arnold sacrificed his ships, sacrificed them with a very definite purpose in mind: that purpose was to delay by every means in his power the progress of the invading forces. He could not hope to defeat them, but there was a bare possibility that he might hold them in check until the approach of winter should oblige General Carleton to return to Canada. With this purpose in view, what was the price of a few gondolas?

Control of the Lake was the vital factor in the campaign, and Arnold hastened forward the completion of his fleet with all the energy of his aggressive nature, and, as a consequence, the American ships took the water fully a month in advance of the British squadron. This gave the American commander time to reconnoiter the Lake thoroughly, accustom his raw crews to their unfamiliar surroundings, observe the movements of the enemy and select his position for the coming battle.

The campaign came to an end very much in accord with Arnold's hopes. General Carleton came up the Lake as far as Crown Point, held possession of that post for a few weeks, then withdrew his army and sailed back to Canada. The fact that during their stay at Crown Point the British gunboats took up their position each night across the narrow arm of the Lake leading to Ticonderoga, is proof that General Arnold, although defeated and his fleet partially destroyed, had, nevertheless, won something of a moral victory.

The invaders were gone and New England breathed freely once more. Valcour Island had won for the colonists an invaluable year of delay. By the following October, the American army was strong

enough to stop Burgoyne's invading army and force its surrender at Saratoga. Burgoyne's surrender determined the intervention of France and hastened the day of the independence of the Colonies.

Toward this happy result the crude and clumsy flotilla on Lake Champlain played its part and passed into oblivion.

## IX

Looking back upon this first fleet action of the American Navy, the picture we would hold in memory is not the stereotyped one of Arnold, the traitor. In its place it is possible to visualize Benedict Arnold as the brilliant naval commander, the born leader of men, the archetype of human courage, the last man to leave a fight—win or lose, land or sea. A warped and twisted soul of fierce passions and uncontrolled impulses, morbidly sensitive to every real or fancied wrong, finding its sole relief in the forefront of battle.

With this thought in mind, we would go back to that October day of long ago and look upon the figure of a thickset young man, his blue coat torn to rags, his face black with powder smoke, aflame with the joy of battle, limping and cursing from gun to gun over the blood-stained deck of his flagship. We would recall to memory the figure of her young commander weak with the exhaustion and strain of a long battle, crawling out on the bowsprit of the flaming 'Congress'—crawling *slowly*, hand over hand on account of his wounded leg—while high above him, half-hidden by the rolling clouds of smoke, there floated from the swaying top mast, the crude emblem of a new nation in whose defense he had fought his little fleet to the last plank.

The front page of our naval history is a record of a gallant feat of arms.





## BENSON (1783–1933) IN EPITOME

By WELLINGTON E. AIKEN

*The history of a small town may seem in passing of small interest except to those intimately concerned with it, but Vermont is a state of small towns and villages, and their history is in sum total the history of the state. Usually, the history written about them tends to become a compilation in which many valuable historical elements of a true history disappear. In this historical sketch of Benson, a town in Rutland County with a population of 572, chartered in 1780, Professor Aiken, a native of Benson, has written in epitome, not only a town history, but a revealing story of days and lives long past. Editor.*

IN THE SPRING OF 1782 two horsemen picked their way through the woods to the north of Carver's Falls, Vermont. There was no road that touched what is now Benson except the unfinished military road to Crown Point, some of the corduroy of which could still be detected a few years ago near Sunset Lake. They were following surveyor's marks which served to indicate a route to the north, possibly as far as Shoreham. There was no one to see these travelers. Between the little group of two or three families at Carver's Falls and the home of one John Carter in Orwell opposite Fort Ticonderoga there was probably not another human being—not even an Indian. For while Indian traces are common from the north end of Lake Champlain to Shoreham, Benson has yielded only the arrowheads or stone axe of an occasional red hunter. And in 1782 the danger from the red-skinned allies of Burgoyne was past. The horsemen were Walter Durfee, first settler in Benson, on his way from Poultney to occupy a grant in Benson that he had purchased two years before from Isaac Clark and John Grover, two of the original proprietors who never occupied their lands; and Daniel Barber who was looking for a likely mill site. Barber found the spot he desired east of the present location of Benson village, where the mill formerly known as O'Donnell's mill now stands. He went back to Massachusetts that summer and did not return till 1783 or 1784, leaving Walter Durfee the only settler.

I have often tried to picture the journey of these two men. The



forest about them was unbroken except for patches of marsh land. Pine, hemlock, elm, oak and maple trees, like the rare first-growth trunks that we still find in remote woods, towered over them. The first settlers in Benson called a fifteen-inch tree small timber. I myself remember hemlocks in this town four feet in diameter at the stump. In such timber, probably the undergrowth was not thick. I find it hard to picture Walter Durfee's dress. In Kentucky, it would almost certainly have been a buckskin hunting shirt and breeches. In Massachusetts it would have been the familiar long coat, knee breeches, woolen stockings and squared-toed shoes, of Revolutionary pictures. Buckskin was sometimes worn in Vermont; but probably Durfee and his companion wore homespun trousers tucked into cowhide boots, butternut shirts, and perhaps coonskin caps. Certainly they carried rifles—not the long Kentucky squirrel rifle—more likely flint-locks. Durfee had an axe tied back of his saddle, and also across his horse's back some corn meal and bacon. Supplies need not worry them. There were deer, squirrels and partridge—and no game laws—and Carver's Falls was only a day's journey away.

Walter Durfee and Daniel Barber rode on to the north under the shadow of tall trees through which the spring sunshine filtered, probably not far from the route of the present turnpike. Progress was slow through the woods; but camp-making consisted only of baiting the horses on a patch of marsh grass, and spreading a blanket on the ground. The next day doubtless saw Durfee eyeing the land from a ledge or a tall tree, looking for a site for his clearing. He found it where the farm of Herman Barber was later located. Here he built a log cabin and made a clearing in the summer and fall.

Of Walter Durfee we know little. I picture him as a spare, sinewy Yankee, with arms and shoulders hard-muscled from the axe, and eyes quick and steady along the barrel of his rifle. One thing is certain, he was a man of courage and energy, and not afraid of his own soul. For consider what lay before him. For six months or more he would be alone in the woods, while we degenerate moderns cannot stand our own solitary society for a few days. With an axe and a hammer and perhaps a saw, he was to build a log house that summer. With an axe and his own strong arms he must make a clearing for the next year's wheat, corn, and potatoes. Think of the labor! First of all, trees up to fifteen inches in diameter were cut, the logs going into his cabin. The brush was piled around the larger standing trees. When this was dry, the piles were burned, and the giant trees killed. The great trunks were left standing, but their dead tops let in the sun

to the crops on the new clearing. Later these dead trees were removed also; meanwhile planting was possible the next year. We have no such forests now; but those of you who have swung an axe can picture the task for yourselves, and say whether Walter Durfee had not need of the strength, energy and determination that is Vermont's inheritance from her pioneer farmers. You will not find his tombstone here in the cemetery. His grave is somewhere in Chazy, N. Y., where he died at the age of ninety.

The charter of the township that Walter Durfee settled had been granted by the General Assembly of Vermont in May, 1780. There were settlers to the north in Shoreham, to the east in Pittsford and Hubbardton, and apparently to the south at Carver's Falls, before this, leaving this section unsettled and largely unexplored. A group of men in Williamstown, Massachusetts, received the first grant of the township from the state of Vermont, and the first meeting of the proprietors was held in that Massachusetts town. Nearly all the early settlers came from Williamstown and Pittsfield.

The name of the township was derived from Judge Benson of the New York Supreme Court, owner of large land grants in Benson under the New York authority. He assured the first settlers that he would not interfere with their titles, and in recognition of his generosity, the Vermont proprietors gave his name to the town. However, a grant by New York to one Wm. Farguabar of 5,000 acres in 1771 was designated as in Benson. Hence, it seems likely that in New York the township was already known by the name.

There is no record of Walter Durfee bringing a family into the town in 1783. It is quite probable that he may not have passed the first winter here. Except for chopping, there is little that he could have done till spring, and a winter in the woods alone could have offered little attraction. The next spring Jonathon Meacham, Capt. James Noble, and his son James Noble, Jr., cleared land in Benson and the same year moved their families to the town.

It is, therefore, this first establishment of community life, rather than the granting of the charter, that we celebrate today.

Settlers followed rapidly. During the next two years among family names still familiar in Benson we find Thomas Hale, Daniel Barber, Allen Goodrich, Simeon Goodrich, James Howard, Amos Root, Charles Belding, Solomon Martin, and Calvin Manley.

The first town meeting was held in 1786. Captain Amabel Smith, Simeon Goodrich, and Captain James Noble were elected selectmen. We can note with envy the fact that no tax was raised. Two years

later, with Stephen Crowfoot, Solomon Martin and James Howard selectmen, a tax of 12 pounds was voted to defray expenses. It was also voted to raise 70 pounds to build a meeting-house 22 by 28 feet; and to pay Mr. Hackley 40 pounds a year for preaching.

During the next two decades families moved into town bearing other names that are still Benson names; Wilcox, Black, Strong, King, Gibbs, Kellogg, Dickinson, Aiken, Higgins.

The town grew rapidly. Daniel Barber built his gristmill, known to men of my age as O'Donnell's mill. Until then the farmers carried their wheat through the woods of Poultney to be ground. Several sawmills were erected. In 1810, Ethan Allen and Wm. Cutler set up a sawmill in Bangall. As early as 1795 Jonas Abbott had a store in this village which he advertised as "furnished with a fresh stock of European and India goods." It sounds very grand. Timothy Watson made and sold boots and shoes. A hotel was built in 1790, afterwards to give place to the old Union Hotel. Schools were provided for in the original charter. A reference to old town and church records shows that at first they had little influence on spelling. But how general intellectual interest grew to be is shown by the fact that before the Civil War twenty-four natives of Benson had graduated from college—a number surprising in those days when going to college was uncommon.

Naturally, religious worship was one of the first interests of the settlers. The church was then conducted as a town enterprise and supported by taxation. In 1787, the town remodeled a dwelling-house as a meeting-house. Various ministers preached in this building, but none of them were settled pastors. In 1790, the Congregational Society was formed, and the same year a one-story building 20 by 24 feet was erected on the spot just south of Williamson's store. Four years later it was moved to the site of the present Methodist parsonage. In 1803, a church modeled after the Pittsfield, Mass., church was erected near the site of the present Congregational Church. This structure was considered a very fine building for its day. Seating was provided by selling the pews at auction. In 1801, the sale netted the surprising sum of \$5,805. It is interesting to note that the two rear pews were reserved for blacks.

The first settled minister of the Benson church was Rev. Dan Kent, who occupied the pulpit from 1791-1828. He was a man of great ability and force, and well known throughout the state. An account of his religious experiences written by himself is to be found in the Congregational Church records for 1835. It shows his intense



moral earnestness—and also that religion was then a rather agonizing affair.

The present Congregational church was erected in 1870.

A vigorous Baptist Society existed from 1796–1865. A Free Will Baptist Society was formed in Carter Street in 1825. Surprisingly, its members mostly became Mormons in 1831 and removed to Ohio.

The Methodist Church was not formed until 1838. Its membership increased. It erected a meeting-house on the present site in 1841, and at once grew rapidly into a strong permanent organization.

The peaceful influence of the church did little to allay the hot political feeling of the time. Western Vermont was prevailingly Anti-Federalist; and in 1798 when Matthew Lyons of Fair Haven, Congressman from Vermont, was imprisoned at Vergennes for bitter criticism of President Adams, Benson showed her devotion to free speech, and her opinion of the Alien and Sedition Law by sending a substantial number of horsemen to Vergennes to escort the hot-headed Irishman on his release in a sort of triumphal procession to his home in Fair Haven.

Meanwhile, the town was growing rapidly. In 1791, there were 658 inhabitants; in 1800, 1159; in 1810, 1561—the largest population it ever had. Until 1830 the population remained nearly stationary. Since then it has slowly declined to half its former number. In the 1840's Benson was still twice the size of Fair Haven.

What was life like in Benson in the early years of the nineteenth century? At first it must have been hard and poor. In 1789, Rev. Nathan Perkins of Hartford, Conn., came into Vermont on a home missionary trip. He passed through Bennington, Manchester and Rutland on up to Burlington through a section mostly developed earlier than Benson, and was greatly depressed by the conditions which he observed. His diary contains these phrases; “poor land, miserable inhabitants, no religion”—meaning no religion just like his—“mean victuals, people nasty, poor, low-lived, indelicate, and miserable cooks, all sadly parsimonious, many profane—no cheese, no butter, no beef—their maple cyder horrible stuff, their beer poor bran beer—only water to drink. Got lost in the woods and heard horrible howling of the wolves.”

The reverend gentleman was very self-satisfied and superior; but unconsciously he pays us a substantial compliment. “When I go from hut to hut in the Wilderness, the people nothing to eat or wear, all work, and yet the women quiet, peaceable, contented, loving their husbands, their homes, never wanting to return, I ask myself are

these women of the same species with our fine ladies? Tough are they, brawny their limbs, will bear work as well as mules. Woods make people love one another and are kind and obliging. Leave their doors unbarred and sleep quietly."

Not so bad from an unfavorable observer. Evidence accumulates that Vermont's early settlers were a hardy breed.

No doubt the log houses with slab floors seemed rude to the Hartford minister. A woman in another town wrote that for weeks after moving in she could see the stars through the half-covered roof. In 1790, many settlers were in real want of food. A family in Shoreham was without wheat or bread for six weeks, and used boiled greens instead. One man in a nearby town cleared a piece of land of forest at \$4.50 an acre, on milk and corn-meal mush twice a day. He then rode on horseback to Hoosic, N. Y., the nearest place where he could buy flour for his children. There was little currency; later when the number of cattle had increased, they were used as a medium of exchange. Sometimes at a gathering in a store a pair of steers would pass from owner to owner till half a dozen debts had been paid, and perhaps be driven away by the original possessor. Equally common currency was cider brandy. But conditions must have rapidly improved. The log cabins gave place to frame houses, erected at raisings where much cider brandy flowed. Wheat and potash from the ashes of the cleared forests were at first the only marketable crops. The nearest market for the wheat was Troy, N. Y. Potash was sold in Canada. In 1791, 1,000 tons were made in Vermont, though it required 480 bushels of ashes to yield one bushel of potash. Sheep early in the century displaced wheat as a mainstay of the farm. The importation of Spanish Merinos, coincident with the rise in the price of wool, gave a tremendous impetus to the industry, of which the west side from Benson to Cornwall was the center. Merino wool sold at over \$1.00 a pound. The price of breeding rams rose into the thousands of dollars, and sheep shearing became the great day of the year. Sharp practices were not unknown; Cornwall seems to have originated the device of dressing over the surface of the fleece with a dye of oil, umber and lamp black. This made the fleece appear of finer quality. So well-known was the practice that the device was generally called "The Cornwall finish."

The Morgan horse came later than the Merino sheep, originating in a cross between an English thoroughbred and an Arabian—some say a French-Canadian mare. The breed became famous throughout the country. Swine must have been numerous as they were sometimes

the subject of town legislation. Benson once noted that hogs be allowed to run in "the highway from May 1 to November 1, if well yoked."

Game was common for some decades after the settlement. Rev. Samuel Williams in his "History of Vermont" (1809) asserts that wolves were common and killed many sheep; not long before that date there are records of organized wolf-hunts in Shoreham. Panthers were becoming rare, but deer and bear, as well as smaller game were common. Sturgeon and salmon were caught in Lake Champlain. And trout and salmon-trout were plentiful. Dr. Williams was not averse to a good fish story: he tells of a pond where trout were so numerous that they were scooped up by the hands and sold by the basket. This suggests the spirit of the passenger-pigeon story of Thales Meacham of Benson, who asserted that he fired a heavy rifle along an oak limb loaded with roosting pigeons, split the limb, and collected twenty-seven pigeons caught in the crack by their toes!

In 1823, the Fair Haven turnpike was still a toll road, repaired by the town of Benson, however, since the town was allowed to pass toll-free. As roads developed, before the opening of the canal south of Whitehall, taverns appeared along the highway through Fair Haven and Benson to Vergennes and Burlington. Some of you will remember Wood's Tavern, the last of the old inns in this section. It is related that at one of these taverns the innkeeper hesitated to give a traveler his dinner, doubting his ability to pay for it. The traveler was noted for his ability to make verse, and agreed in payment for his dinner, to furnish a verse to advertise the tavern, two lines to be composed before dinner, and two after. The inn had been constructed from a small disused church. The first two lines read:

*There hangs a sign. 'Tis made of pine.  
And swings among the trees.*

After a rather poor meal the guest was inspired to add.

*This house was once a house of prayer.  
'Tis now a den of thieves.*

There was little change in the life in Benson for years after the War of 1812. The scythe in summer and the axe in the fall were as busy as ever. Every family had its patch of flax, its spinning wheel, and perhaps a loom. The cobbler made his periodical rounds, patching and making shoes. Sugar-making, and sugaring-offs enlivened the woods in March and early April. Apple-paring bees, raisings, and an



occasional wedding; the big sheep-shearing, and June training, diversified the social life. This last institution was a part of the militia system, attendance being required until 1844 of all able-bodied citizens of specified age. Vermonters then as now were at home with guns, but with the passing of Revolutionary War soldiers, company evolutions became something of a mystery, even to the officers. One captain in a nearby town, desperate at the confusion of his platoon, rushed among his men, pushing them back into ranks and shouting, "Git back into your own bunch, gol darn ye: and next time swing round like a barn door!" Training day became a holiday marked by noise, powder-smoke, a baseball game, eating and drinking. The refreshment booths seem to have anticipated modern Vermont road-stands in securing tame bears as attractions. When the Legislature discontinued training day in 1844, the students of the University of Vermont for some ten years annually arranged a mock training on the Burlington city park, which attracted thousands of spectators. The husking-bee implied pie, doughnuts and cider, and a barn dance. September election was enlivened by wrestling matches, jumping, lifting weights, and libations of spruce beer and stronger waters.

Around the church centered much of the community life. Its services made strenuous demands on the time of its members. There are still living a few who recall two long sermons on Sunday and another at the mid-week meeting. A two-hour sermon was no rarity. No work save necessary farm chores was done on Sunday by any decent church-member. Traveling on Sunday was forbidden. And parents were admonished to restrain their children from vain amusements. One boy, later a prominent Benson citizen, was seen to throw a snowball at his brother on Sunday. His father led him solemnly aside, and assured him that if he were to die that day he would burn forever. Church trials were not infrequent, and were as much feared as the hand of the law. In the old church records we read of admonitions, or expulsions—for neglect of family prayer; for breach of the Sabbath, gambling and profanity; for failure to attend meeting; for profane swearing, for "refusing to live with his wife and the use of profane language when labored with"; for being "disguised with liquor" at June training. (Delightful phrase!) Our grandmothers seem to have been less meek than sometimes supposed; it was a woman who was disciplined because she refused to be "laboured with"; and another who treated the committee in "an unregenerate and contumelious manner."

The frequent entries in old account books of items of cider brandy

prepare us for the instances of intemperance. Even Priest Kent, as he was called, once indulged too much on his New Year's calls. On coming out of the house of a parishioner on the shore of Lake Champlain, he gazed somewhat confusedly over the snow-covered ice, and exclaimed admiringly, "I never realized before, sir; that you had any such magnificent meadow as that down here!" Apparently even the serious nature of church trials could not always restrain the practical jokes. It was in another town that a man declared that he had seen the elder and his wife pulling hair in their yard. An investigation by the church authorities revealed that it was the hog's hair that they were pulling, at the fall butchering. The town as well as the church kept strict supervision over delinquent citizens. About 1810 the records show various instances when the town constable was directed to summon an inhabitant "to depart this town" with his family. This procedure might even now sometimes prove serviceable.

I have no intention of following the history of Benson from that early day down to the present time. Many of you know the traditions of the later years better than I. But I must not close without some brief references to our military history.

Twenty-two of the early settlers were Revolutionary War Pensioners. The names of many of them are still family names in the town. It is not probable that Benson took much active part in the War of 1812. The war and the embargo on trade with Canada were not popular in Vermont, and smuggling into Canada was conducted on a large scale. The first case of capital punishment in Vermont was the hanging of Cyrus Dean for the killing of a revenue officer in 1810. Governor Chittenden refused to order the militia of Vermont out of the state. When the British force marched on Plattsburg, however, Vermont citizens rushed to the defense of their frontier. But since Shoreham, by the greatest possible effort, did not manage to get her company to Plattsburg until the battle was over, it is hardly likely that Benson did more than raise a force.

The Mexican War could have made no appeal at all to Benson. It was regarded as a pro-slavery struggle, and the Vermont Legislature by vote once refused to support it.

The Civil War was another story. To Vermonters it was not only a struggle to preserve the Union, but an attack on the hated institution of slavery. The heart of the state was in it. Eleven days after Sumter was fired on the Vermont Legislature met, appropriated \$1,000,000, voted to raise six regiments, and adjourned the next day. In all, Vermont sent to war 18 regiments, besides three companies

of sharpshooters. She furnished one-sixth of all the sharpshooters in the Union Army. This town did her full share in the struggle. She sent to the war more than one hundred men, practically all volunteers. Making allowance for women and the large families of children then common, probably one of every two able-bodied men of military age enlisted. A large number of these men were in the Fourteenth Vermont, especially in Co. D., Captain Abel commanding. Dr. Smart of Benson was Chaplain of the Regiment. Together with four other regiments it formed the famous Second Vermont Brigade. The regiment was wholly a volunteer body; it never lost a man by desertion. Twice with the rest of the brigade it made glorious history. On the second day of Gettysburg the Confederates had driven a gap in the Union Center on Cemetery Ridge, and Wright's Georgia brigade was advancing to cut the Union line in two, opposed only by Gen. Meade's staff. At this critical moment, says Col. Meade, the General's son, "We saw a column of infantry come swinging down the Tarreytown road in close column of divisions at a sharp double-quick, flags flying, arms at right shoulder, officers steadying the men with sharp commands. The head of the column wheeled right and moved up to the line of battle. A line of skirmishers was thrown forward to meet the advancing Georgians, who checked as they saw their opportunity lost. A moment later General Meade exclaimed, 'It's all right now!'" It was the Second Vermont Brigade, which had just completed a march of 138 miles in six days and arrived at Gettysburg in time to close this dangerous gap on Cemetery Ridge. The next day the Brigade executed the movement that wrecked Pickett's great charge. For by common consent historians agree that it was the crossfire and charge of the Fourteenth and Sixteenth Vermont that doubled up the right of Pickett's line in a mass of men where every bullet found a mark, which formed the pivotal movement of the critical battle of the Civil War. The Benson veterans treasured the memory of their services after the war, and with Shoreham and Orwell organized the only mounted G.A.R. post in New England, a body of horse that served as escort to the President of the United States at the dedication of the Bennington Battle Monument.

But for my part, when I think of the Benson boys in the war—they were literally boys of only eighteen or twenty—my mind turns rather to the gruelling march of 138 miles in six days, on hardtack, and in one case a piece of muddy salt pork from the road; a march in which this brigade, unused to marching, gained a whole day on



the veteran First Corps; or the hours spent lying on the ground under the terrific cannonade of Lee's guns at Gettysburg, when Col. Veasey assures us that these men for the most part went to sleep. I picture the way in which after the rally in the village these boys went home to announce to silent women, "Well, I've enlisted," or the scene when one of them returning from service, walked out where his father was driving the mowing machine and remarked undramatically, "Hello, Father, I'll drive the machine a while." The Vermont temperament is not spectacular, but in times of crisis it can be depended on.

Benson's record in the World War is too recent to require review. Like all Vermont, at home or in Service, she did her full part.

Ours has been a past that does not lend itself to spectacular history. The annals of a predominately agricultural town make no dramatic narrative. They are written, no less significantly, in the soil—in ridges of old ploughed fields long since reverted to pasture or woodland, in logs of corduroy roads rotting in old swamps, gnarled old apple trees clustered around half-filled cellar holes in the woods; in old ox yokes and ox shoes, wheat cradles, wool cards, and spinning wheels; in weather-beaten gray barns with twenty-inch timbers in the frame as firm as a hundred years ago; in chairs and tables without a nail or a drop of glue, which laugh to scorn the gimcrack furniture of the mail-order trade. These things are the record of hard-working generations who built Vermont. Not less is the heritage of character implanted by the labors of our church-going fathers; by hours spent at the whittled desks in bare old schoolhouses; by earnest thought and loud argument of generations that took their politics as seriously as their religion; by unselfish service of school district, town and church; and the unpretentious neighborliness in days of birth and sickness and death.

*These homes, this valley spread below me here,  
The barns, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,  
Have been the heartfelt things past speaking dear  
To unknown generations of dead men.  
Surely above these fields a spirit broods,  
A sense of many watchers hovering near  
By the mown meadows and the quiet woods,  
Loved to the death, inestimably dear.*

The pioneer of Vermont was not a seeker of gold at the end of a rainbow. He wrote no glamorous history like the winning of the

West. He was no frontier anarchist beyond the reach of law. He was an orderly man who based his resistance to New York on proper legal paper issued by New Hampshire; a man who was not afraid of work, who carved his farm out of forest land and cleared the soil stump by stump and stone by stone. In a real sense he was the maker of his own destinies. He has never depended greatly on the Federal Government; nor trusted too completely to the tourist trade. That is why Vermont is still Vermont, and the old names still persist. That is why Vermont is not panicky in times of depression. Self-reliance begets a feeling of security. Especially is this true of small agricultural towns. If the N. R. A. should fail in its efforts; if business should crash, banks close, and federal credit collapse, quarrymen in Barre might strike, and clerks in Burlington might starve, but the farmers in Benson would adjust themselves somehow to the changed conditions. They would have their houses and woodlots for winter; they could raise food enough to eat, and my remembrance is that their wives know how to cook it. There are probably blacksmiths who could forge an axe, and mills that can grind a grist; and the old mare would pull the buckboard as fast as she did before Henry Ford, at the price of some \$20,000,000, generously consented to become the angel of American transportation. Of all debts we owe to the pioneers of Benson, the greatest is this feeling of ultimate security.

Benson was here 150 years ago, going industriously about her business of earning a living. She is doing the same thing today. She will be doing it, whatever the staggering changes, when she celebrates her two hundredth anniversary fifty years hence.

In anticipation of that event, it would seem to be our responsibility to see that the generation of that day look back on us with some measure of the respect with which we recall those earlier pioneers.

[SESQUICENTENNIAL ADDRESS—BENSON, 1933]



## PAGES FROM THE PAST

*History seen through other eyes often lacks a certain vitality that only first-hand acquaintance with the primary material can give. Our series of "Pages from the Past" began in January. These pages are taken from Peter Kalm's Travels in North America. He came to this country in 1748, visited various colonies, and then came northward to Lake Champlain. We have selected pages which have a bearing on Vermont history. Kalm was a recognized scientist in Sweden, and his visit was made under the auspices of the Swedish Academy of Science. For further details see the Postscript. Editor.*

### 3. JULY THE 2ND

*At Crown Point.* Early this morning we set out on our journey again, it being moonlight and calm, and we feared lest the wind should change and become unfavorable to us if we stopped any longer. We all rowed as hard as possible, and happily arrived about eight in the morning at Fort St. Frédéric, which the English call Crown Point. Monsieur Lusignan, the governor, received us very politely. He was about fifty years old, well acquainted with polite literature, and had made several journeys into this country, by which he had acquired an exact knowledge of several things relative to it.

*Drought.* I was informed that during the whole of this summer, a continual drought had been here, and that they had not had any rain since last spring. The excessive heat had retarded the growth of plants, and on all dry hills the grass and a vast number of plants had dried up. The small trees which grew near rocks, heated by the sun, had withered leaves and the grain in the fields bore a very wretched appearance. The wheat had not yet eared, nor were the peas in blossom. The ground was full of wide, deep cracks, into which the little snakes retired and hid when pursued, as into an impregnable asylum. . . .

*Forest Fires.* The country hereabout, it is said, contains vast forests of firs of the white, black and red varieties, which formerly had been still more extensive. One of the chief reasons for their decrease is the numerous fires which happen every year in the woods, through the carelessness of the Indians, who frequently make great fires



when they are hunting, which spread over the fir woods when everything is dry . . .

#### JULY THE 5TH

*Indian Revenge.* While we were at dinner we heard several times a repeated, disagreeable, bloodcurdling outcry, some distance from the fort, in the river Woodcreek: Mr. Lusignan, the commander, told us this cry was ominous, because he could conclude from it that the Indians, whom we escaped near Fort Anne, had completed their design of avenging the death of one of their brethren upon the English, and that their shouts showed that they had killed an Englishman. As soon as I came to the window, I saw their boat, with a long pole at the front, at the extremity of which they had put a bloody human scalp. As soon as they had landed, we heard that they, being six in number, had continued their journey (from the place where we saw marks of their passing the night) till they had gotten within the English boundaries, where they found a man and his son employed in harvesting. They crept on towards this man and shot him dead. This happened near the very village where the English, two years before, killed the brother of one of these Indians, who had then gone out to attack them. According to their custom they cut off the scalp of the dead man and took it with them, together with his clothes and his son, who was about nine years old. As soon as they came within a mile of Fort St. Frédéric, they put the scalp on a pole in the fore part of the boat, and shouted as a sign of their success. They were dressed in shirts, as usual, but some of them had put on the dead man's clothes; one his coat, the other his breeches, another his hat, etc. their faces were painted with vermilion, with which their shirts were marked across the shoulders. Most of them had great rings in their ears, which seemed to be a great inconvenience to them, as they were obliged to hold them when they leaped or did anything which required a violent motion. Some of them had girdles of the skins of rattlesnakes, with the rattles on them; the son of the murdered man had nothing but his shirt, breeches and cap, and the Indians had marked his shoulders with red. When they got on shore they took hold of the pole on which the scalp was put, and danced and sung at the same time. Their object of taking the boy was to carry him to their tent, to bring him up instead of their dead brother, and afterwards to marry him to one of their relations so that he might become one of them. Notwithstanding they had perpetrated this act of violence in time of peace, contrary to the command of the governor

in Montreal, and to the advice of the governor of St. Frédéric, the latter could not at present deny them provisions and whatever they wanted for their journey, because he did not think it advisable to exasperate them; but when they came to Montreal, the governor called them to account for this action, and took the boy from them, whom he afterwards sent to his relations. Mr. Lusignan asked them what they would have done to me and my companions, if they had met us in the wilderness. They replied that as it was their chief intention to take their revenge on the Englishmen in the village where their brother had been killed, they would have let us alone. But it would have depended on the humor they were in when we first came in sight. However, the commander and all the Frenchmen said that what had happened to me was infinitely safer and better.

*Huge Skeleton Found.* Some years ago a skeleton of an amazingly large animal had been found in that part of Canada where the Illinois live. One of the lieutenants in the fort assured me that he had seen it. The Indians who were there, had found it in a swamp. They were surprised at the sight of it, and when they were asked what they thought it was, they answered that it must be the skeleton of the chief or father of all the beavers. It was of a prodigious bulk, and had thick white teeth, about ten inches long. It was looked upon as the skeleton of an elephant. The lieutenant assured me that the figure of the whole snout was yet to be seen though it was half mouldered. He added that he had not observed whether any of the bones had been taken away, but thought the skeleton lay intact there. I have heard people talk of this monstrous skeleton in several parts of Canada.

*Bears* are plentiful hereabouts, and they kept a young one about three months old at the fort. He had exactly the same shape and qualities as our common bears in Europe, except the ears, which seemed to be longer in proportion, and the hairs which were stiffer; his color was deep brown, almost black. He played and wrestled every day with one of the dogs. A vast number of bear skins are annually exported to France from Canada. The Indians prepare an oil from the bear's fat, with which in summer they daub their faces, hands, and all naked parts of the body, to secure them from the bite of the gnats. With this oil they likewise frequently smear the body, when they are excessively cold, tired with labor, hurt, and in other cases. They believe it softens the skin, and makes the body pliant, and promotes longevity.

*Dandelion Greens.* The common dandelion (*Leontodon taraxacum* L.)

grew in abundance in the pastures and on the borders of the grain fields, and was now in flower. In spring when the young leaves begin to come up, the French dig up the plants, take their roots, wash them, cut them, and prepare them in vinegar as a common salad; but they have a bitter taste. It is not unusual here to make use of the leaves for eating.

#### JULY THE 6TH

*Veterans' Cottages.* The soldiers who had been paid off after the war had built houses round the fort on the grounds allotted to them; but most of these habitations were no more than wretched cottages, no better than those in the most wretched places of Sweden. There was that difference, however, that their inhabitants here were rarely oppressed by hunger, and could eat good and pure wheat bread. The huts which they had erected consisted of boards, standing perpendicularly close to each other. The roofs were of wood too. The crevices were stopped up with clay to keep the room warm. The floor was usually clay, or a black limestone, which is common here. The hearth was built of the same stone, except the place where the fire was to burn, which was made of gray stones, which for the greatest part consisted of particles of quartz. In some hearths the stones quite close to the fireplace were of limestone. However, I was assured that there was no danger of fire, especially if the stones which were most exposed to the heat were of a large size. Dampers had never been used here and the people had no glass in their windows. . . .

The *Fences* were just like the most common ones in Sweden only that the distance between the slender upright posts was sometimes as much as eighteen feet. For binding the pairs of posts hickory was used; a circle was made of it and then tied.

#### JULY THE 9TH

The skeleton of a whale was found a few French miles from Quebec, and one French mile from the St. Lawrence River, in a place where there is no flowing water at present. This skeleton was of a very great size, and the governor of the fort said he had spoken with several people who had seen it.

#### JULY THE 10TH

*Boats.* The boats which are here used, are of three kinds. 1. Bark boats, made of the bark of trees, with ribs of wood; 2. Canoes, consisting of a single piece of wood, hollowed out, which I have already



described. These are here made of the white fir, and of different sizes. They are not propelled by rowing but by paddling, by which method not half the strength can be applied which is used in rowing. A single man might, I think, row as fast as two of them could paddle. 3. The third kind of boats are bateaux. They are always made very large here, and used for large cargoes. They are flat-bottomed, and the bottom is made of red, but more commonly of white, oak which shows better resistance when it runs against a stone than other wood. The sides are made of white fir, because oak would make the bateau too heavy. They make plenty of tar and pitch here.

*A Soldier's Rations.* The soldiery enjoy such advantages here as they are not allowed in any part of the world. Those who formed the garrison of this place had a very plentiful allowance from their government. They get every day a pound and a half of wheat bread, which is almost more than they can eat. They likewise get plenty of peas, bacon, and salt or dried meat. Sometimes they kill oxen and other cattle, the flesh of which is distributed among the soldiers. All the officers kept cows, at the expense of the king, and the milk they gave was more than sufficient to supply them. The soldiers had each a small garden outside the fort, which they were allowed to attend and to plant in it whatever they liked. Some of them had built summer-houses in them and planted all kinds of vegetables. The governor told me that it was a general custom to allow the soldiers a plot of ground for kitchen gardens, at such of the French forts hereabouts as were not situated near great towns, from whence they could be supplied. In time of peace the soldiers have very little guard duty when at the fort; and as the lake close by was full of fish, and the woods abounded with birds and animals, those amongst them who chose to be diligent could live extremely well and like a lord in regard to food. Each soldier got a new coat every two years; but annually, a waistcoat, cap, hat, breeches, cravat, two pair of stockings, two pair of shoes, and as much wood as he had occasion for in winter. They likewise got five *sols* apiece every day, which is augmented to thirty sols when they have any particular labor for the king. When this is considered it is not surprising to find the men are very healthy, well fed, strong and lively here. When a soldier falls sick he is brought to the hospital, where the king provides him with a bed, food, medicine, and people to take care of and serve him. When some of them asked leave to be absent for a day or two to go away it was generally granted them if circumstances would permit, and they enjoyed as usual their share of provisions and money, but were obliged to get

some of their comrades to mount guard for them as often as it came to their turns, for which they gave them an equivalent. The governor and officers were duly honored by the soldiers; however, the soldiers and officers often spoke together as comrades, without any ceremonies, and with a very becoming freedom. The soldiers who are sent hither from France commonly serve till they are forty or fifty years old, after which they are honorably discharged and allowed to settle upon and cultivate a piece of ground. But if they have agreed on their arrival to serve no longer than a certain number of years, they are dismissed at the expiration of their term. Those who are born here commonly agree to serve the crown during six, eight, or ten years, after which they are (honorably) discharged and settle down as farmers in the country. The king presents each discharged soldier with a piece of land, being commonly 40 arpents long and but three broad, if the soil be of equal goodness throughout; but they get somewhat more, if it be poorer. As soon as a soldier settles to cultivate such a piece of land, he is at first assisted by the king, who supplies him, his wife and children with provisions during the first three or four years. The king likewise gives him a cow and the most necessary instruments for agriculture. Some soldiers are sent to assist him in building a house, for which the king pays them. These are of great help to a poor man who begins to keep house, and it seems that in a country where the troops are so highly distinguished by royal favor, the king cannot be at a loss for soldiers. For the better cultivation and population of Canada, a plan was proposed some years ago for sending three hundred men over from France every year, by which means the old soldiers might always be retired, marry and settle in the country. The land which was allotted to the soldiers about this place, was very good, consisting throughout of a deep mould, mixed with clay.

The *food* which the better classes of Frenchmen ate was as follows: for dinner, clear soup, with slices of wheat bread and various kinds of relishes; then a dish of cooked meat, sometimes fried after being cooked; occasionally beef or mutton, squabs or fowl. It was almost always fresh. Often the third course consisted of green peas and occasionally fried fish. The wheat bread used was quite good, but ordinarily, according to my taste, too salt. The salt was a gray, finely powdered variety. No cheese was served and very little butter, which had little salt in it. Milk was seldom used and generally it was boiled milk with slices of wheat bread in it, or fresh milk with berries similar to our blackberries. Occasionally pancakes were to

be had. For a beverage the Frenchmen either used pure wine, usually red wine, mixed with water, or else just water or spruce beer. In the evening there were served two dishes of meat, both fried, sometimes a fricassee or fried pigeons, also fried fish, and now and then milk with berries. The third course in the evening was almost always a salad prepared in the usual manner . . .

#### JULY THE 17TH

*Diseases Common in Canada.* The diseases which ravage the Indians are rheumatism and pleurisy, which arise from their being obliged frequently to lie in the wet parts of the woods at night, from the sudden changes of heat and cold, to which the air is exposed here, and from their being frequently loaded with too great a quantity of strong liquor, in which case they commonly lie down naked in the open air, without any regard to the season or the weather. Of these diseases, pleurisy especially is likewise very common among the French here. The governor told me he had once had a very violent fit of the latter, and that Dr. Sarrazin had cured him in the following manner, which has been found to succeed best here. He gave him sudorifics, which were to operate in eight or ten hours. He was then bled, and the sudorifics repeated. He was bled again, and that effectually cured him. . . .

Dr. Sarrazin was the royal physician at Quebec, and a correspondent of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris. He was possessed of great knowledge in the practice of medicine, anatomy, and other sciences, and very agreeable in his behavior. He died at Quebec, of a malignant fever, which had been brought to that place by a ship, and with which he was infected at a hospital, where he visited the sick. He left a son, who likewise studied medicine, and went to France to make himself more perfect in the practical part of it, but he died there.

The intermitting fever sometimes appears amongst the people here, and venereal disease is common. The Indians are likewise infected with it; many of them have had it, and some still have it; but they are possessed of an infallible art of curing it. There are examples of Frenchmen and Indians, infected all through the body with this disease, who have been "radically" and perfectly cured by the Indians within five or six months. The French have not been able to find out this remedy, though they know that the Indians employ no mercury, but that their chief remedies are roots, which are unknown to the French. I afterwards heard what these plants were and



gave an account of them to the Royal Swedish Academy of Science.

We are very well acquainted in Sweden with the pain caused by the taeniae, or a kind of tape worm. They are less abundant in the British North American colonies, but in Canada they are very common. Some of these worms, which have been evacuated by a person, have been several yards long. It is not known whether the Indians are afflicted with them or not. No particular remedies against them are known here, and no one can tell whence they come, though the eating of some fruits contributes, as is believed, in creating them.

#### JULY THE 19TH

*At Crown Point.* Fort St. Frédéric is a fortification on the southern extremity of Lake Champlain, situated on a neck of land, between that lake and the river, which arises from the union of the river Woodcreek, and Lake St. Sacrement. The breadth of this river is here about a good musketshot. The English call this fortress Crown Point, but its French name is derived from the French secretary of state, Frédéric Maurepas, in whose hands the direction and management of the French court of admiralty was at the time of the erection of this fort. It is to be observed that the government of Canada is subjected to the court of admiralty in France, and the governor-general is always chosen from that court. As most places in Canada bear the names of saints, custom has made it necessary to prefix the word Saint to the name of the fortress. The fort is built on a rock, consisting of black lime or slate, as mentioned before. It is nearly square, has high, thick walls made of the same limestone, of which there is a quarry about half a mile from the fort. On the eastern part of the fort, is a high tower, which is proof against bombshells, provided with very thick and substantial walls, and well stored with cannon from the bottom almost to the very top; and the governor lives in the tower. On one side of the fort is a pretty little church, and on the other side, houses of stone for the officers and soldiers. There are sharp rocks on all sides towards the land, beyond a cannon shot from the fort, and among them are some which are as high as the walls of the fort and very near them.

The Englishmen insist that this fort is built on their territory and that the boundary between the French and English colonies in this locality lies between Fort St. Jean and the Prairie de la Madeleine; on the other hand, the French maintain that the boundary runs through the woods, between Lake St. Sacrement and Fort Nicholson.

The soil about Fort St. Frédéric is said to be very fertile, on both

sides of the river, and before the last war a great many French families, especially old soldiers, settled there, but the king obliged them to go into Canada, or to settle close to the fort, and sleep in it at night. A great number of them returned at this time, and it was thought that about forty or fifty families would go to settle here this autumn. Within one or two musketshots to the east of the fort, is a windmill, built of stone with very thick walls, and most of the flour which is needed to supply the fort is ground here. This windmill is so constructed as to serve the purpose of a redoubt, and at the top of it are four or five small pieces of cannon. During the last war, a number of soldiers was quartered in this mill, because they could from there look a great way up the river, and observe whether the English boats approached, which could not be done from the fort itself. This was a matter of great consequence, as the English might (if this guard had not been placed here) have gone in their little boats close under the western shore of the river, and then the hills would have prevented their being seen from the fort. Therefore the fort ought to have been built on the spot where the mill stands, and all those who come to see it, are immediately struck with the absurdity of its location. If it had been erected in the place of the mill, it would have commanded the river, and prevented the approach of the enemy; and a small ditch cut through the loose limestone, from the river (which comes out of the Lake St. Sacrement) to Lake Champlain, would have surrounded the fort with flowing water, because it would have been situated at the extremity of the neck of land. In that case the fort would always have been sufficiently supplied with fresh water, and at a distance from the high rocks which surround it in its present situation. We prepared to-day to leave this place, having waited several days for the arrival of the boat, which plies constantly all summer between the forts Saint Jean and Fort St. Frédéric. During our stay here, we had received many favors. The governor of the fort, Mr. Lusignan, a man of learning and of great politeness, heaped kindness upon us, and treated us with as much civility as if we had been his relations. I had the honor of eating at his table during my stay here, and my servant was allowed to eat with his. We had our rooms, etc., to ourselves, and at our departure the governor supplied us with ample provisions for our journey to Fort Saint Jean. In short he did us more favors than we could have expected from our own countrymen, and the officers were likewise particularly obliging to us.

*On Lake Champlain.* About eleven o'clock in the morning we set out with a fair wind. On both sides of the lake are high chains of

mountains, with the difference which I have before observed, that on the eastern shore is a low piece of ground covered with a forest, extending between nine to twelve English miles, after which the mountains begin, and the country beyond them belongs to New England. This chain consists of high mountains, which are to be considered as the boundaries between the French and English possessions in these parts of North America. On the western shore of the lake, the mountains reach to the waterside. The lake at first is but a French mile broad, but keeps increasing in size afterwards. The country is inhabited within a French mile of the fort, but after that it is covered with a thick forest. At a distance of about ten French miles from Fort St. Frédéric, the lake is four such miles broad, and we perceived some islands in it. The captain of the boat said there were some of considerable size. He assured me that the lake was in most parts so deep that a line of two hundred yards could not fathom it, and close to the shore, where a chain of mountains generally runs across the country, it frequently has a depth of eighty fathoms. Fourteen French miles from Fort St. Frédéric we saw four large islands in the lake, which is here about six French miles broad. This day the sky was cloudy, and the clouds, which were very low, seemed to surround several high mountains near the lake with a fog. From many mountains the fog rose, as the smoke of a charcoal kiln. Now and then we saw a little river which emptied into the lake. The country behind the high mountains, on the western side of the lake, is, as I am told, covered for many miles with tall forests, intersected by many rivers and brooks with marshes and small lakes, and is very suitable for habitations. The shores are sometimes rocky and sometimes sandy here. Towards night the mountains decreased gradually. The lake was very clear, and we observed neither rocks nor shallows in it. Late last night the wind abated, and we anchored close to the shore, and spent one night here.

#### JULY THE 20TH

This morning we proceeded with a fair wind. The place where we passed the night was more than half way to Fort Saint Jean, for the distance of that place from Fort St. Frédéric, across Lake Champlain, is computed to be forty-one French miles. That lake is here about six English miles in breadth. The mountains were now out of sight, and the country low, plain and covered with trees. The shores were sandy, and the lake appeared now from four to six miles broad. It was really broader but the islands made it appear narrower.



*Indians.* We often saw Indians in bark boats, close to the shore, which was, however, not inhabited, for the Indians came here only to catch sturgeons, wherewith this lake abounds, and which we often saw leaping up into the air. These Indians lead a very singular life. At one time of the year they live on the small store of corn, beans, and melons, which they have planted; during another period, or about this time, their food is fish, without bread or any other meat; and another season they eat nothing but game, such as stags, roes, beavers, etc., which they shoot in the woods and rivers. They, however, enjoy long life, perfect health, and are more able to undergo hardships than other people. They sing and dance, are joyful and always content, and would not for a great deal exchange their manner of life for that which is preferred in Europe.

When we were yet ten French miles from Fort Saint Jean, we saw some houses on the western side of the lake, in which the French had lived before the last war, and which they then abandoned, as it was by no means safe. They now returned to them again. These were the first houses and settlements which we saw after we had left those about Fort St. Frédéric.

*An Old Fort.* There formerly was a wooden fort or redoubt on the eastern side of the lake, near the waterside, and the place where it stood was shown to me; at present it is quite overgrown with trees. The French built it to prevent the incursions of the Indians over this lake, and I was assured that many Frenchmen had been slain in these places. At the same time the Canadians told me that they numbered four women to one man in Canada, because annually several Frenchmen were killed on their expeditions which they undertook for the sake of trading with the Indians.

*A windmill,* built of stone, stood on the east side of the lake on a projecting piece of ground. Some Frenchmen lived near it; but they left it when the war broke out, and have not yet come back to it. From this mill to Fort Saint Jean they considered it eight French miles. The English, with their Indians, had burnt the houses here several times, but the mill remained unhurt.

The boat in which we went to Saint Jean was the first that was built here, and employed on Lake Champlain, for formerly they made use of bateaux to send provisions over the lake. The Captain was a Frenchman born in this country. He had built it in order to find out the true course, between Fort Saint Jean and Fort Saint Frédéric. Opposite the windmill the lake was about three fathoms deep, but it grew more and more shallow, the nearer it came to Fort Saint Jean.

We now perceived houses on the shore again. The captain had otter skins in the cabin, which in color and species were just like the European ones. Otters are said to be very abundant in Canada.

*Seals.* Sealskins were here made use of to cover boxes and trunks, and they often made provision bags and hand bags of them in Canada. The common people had their tobacco pouches made of the same skins and the shape was like those of the same material used in western Sweden (Gothenburg and Bohuslän) and in Norway. They folded them together when they carried them about or laid them aside. The fur was on the outside. The common people were accustomed to smoke tobacco a good deal on their journeys and at their work; but I never saw anyone chew it here as the English and Dutch sailors are accustomed to do. The seals here are the same as the Swedish, which are gray with black spots. They are said to be plentiful at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, below Quebec, and to go up that river as far as the water is salt. They have not been found in any of the great lakes of Canada. The French call them *Loups marins*, or sea-wolves.

*Prayers.* The French, in their colonies, spend much more time in prayer and external worship than the English and Dutch settlers in the British colonies. The latter have neither morning nor evening prayer in their ships and boats, and no difference is made between Sundays and other days. They never, or very seldom, say grace at dinner. On the contrary, the French here have prayers every morning and night on board their ships, and on Sundays they pray more than commonly. They regularly say grace both before and after their meals and cross themselves. The captain kneels in prayer at his bed in the morning, and every one says prayers in private as soon as he gets up. At Fort St. Frédéric all the soldiers assemble together for morning and evening prayers. The only fault is that most of the prayers are read in Latin, which a great part of the people do not understand.

Below the afore-mentioned windmill, the breadth of the lake is about a musketshot, and it looks more like a river than a lake. The country on both sides is low and flat, and covered with deciduous trees. We saw at first a few scattered cottages along the shore, but a little further on, the country was uninhabited without interruption. The lake was here from six to ten feet deep, and had several islands. During the whole course of this voyage, the direction of the lake was always directly from S.S.W. to N.N.E.

In some parts of Canada are great tracts of land belonging to

individual persons. From these lands, pieces of forty arpens long and four wide are allotted to each discharged soldier who intends to settle here; but after his household is established, he is obliged to pay the owner of the land six French francs annually.

The lake was now so shallow in several places that we were obliged to trace the way for the boat by sounding the depth with branches of trees. In other places opposite it was sometimes two fathoms deep.

In the evening, about sunset, we arrived at Fort Saint Jean, or St. John, having had a continual change of rain, sunshine, wind and calm all afternoon.







## A VERMONT SKETCHBOOK

### I. VERMONT'S NEGLECTED HERO *by* KARL S. BRONG

*Did Samuel Beach or Gershom Beach emulate in a Vermont setting the ride of Paul Revere? This question has been debated in Vermont and elsewhere for many a year. Mr. Brong believes he has the final answer. Editor.*

It was only three weeks after Paul Revere's ride and the battles of Concord and Lexington, on April 18th, 1775, that the peace of the little Vermont hamlet of Castleton was disturbed by the tramp of feet and the rattle of arms. The Green Mountain Boys were marching. Singly they came, by twos and threes and in small groups, in response to Ethan Allen's fervent vow to lead them down the glory road to victory at Ticonderoga.

Carillion, as the fortress had been called by the French from the sound the water makes where Lakes George and Champlain meet, was then in possession of the British. Occupying the top of a lofty promontory it was the watchtower, the gateway to the ancient highway to war.

The fort's favored situation made it a place of great strategic value and a prize greatly to be desired. For some time the rebellious colonists had considered its reduction, and now the hour for the execution of the desperate plan had struck.

Although the fort had been reconnoitered and found to be inadequately conditioned and garrisoned, the bold but prudent Allen deemed his force too small to storm those frowning heights; so he sought means of recruiting his little army. A messenger must be sent to summon more men.

Among the first of the Minute Men to arrive at Castleton were Gershom and Samuel Beach, father and son. They came from Rutland, and were well known to Allen, who now sought them out.

Samuel had just turned twenty-three. His flaming zest for liberty and his fleetness of foot recommended him for the mission. A brief interview convinced Allen he was the man for the job. He needed no urging. Indeed so eager was he to be off that he could scarcely wait for Allen to complete his instructions.

It was on the morning of the ninth of May that the youthful mess-

enger set out down the Rutland road on the epic journey that was to take him through ten wilderness townships before he reached Hand's Cove, the place of embarkation, on Lake Champlain.

The few settlers between Castleton and Rutland needed no notice of what was afoot. So Samuel passed rapidly on. He clattered across the wooden bridge over Otter Creek into Rutland, where his clarion voice brought the startled farmers from their fields and woodlots as he sped northward toward the next settlement.

His sister Ruth lived in Pittsford, and there he stopped long enough to speak a few anxious words and to arrange for her husband, Col. Benjamin Cooley, to notify his neighbors of the rendezvous that night at Hand's Cove.

Then he continued on his northern course through Brandon into Leicester where his echoing summons sent Samuel Torrey, that ardent foe of tyranny, running for his gun and powderhorn.

Running and walking, Samuel roused the inmates of every house he passed as his hurried journey carried him through Salisbury and along the shore of beautiful Lake Dunmore to the northern end of his journey in Middlebury. There he turned west and again crossed Otter Creek into Cornwall. Swiftly he made his clamorous way across that town into Whiting.

It was almost dark when he reached the old military road that Amherst had built from Lake Champlain to Charlestown on the Connecticut River in the time of the French and Indian War.

The candles began to gleam in the windows of the houses as he jogged through Whiting—the district which some day he would represent in the Legislature—and waded Lemon Fair, a tributary of Otter Creek, into Shoreham.

The night was still young when Samuel's message fell like a trumpet call on the drowsy ears of the people of Shoreham, most of whom had retired for the night—or so they had thought.

He had plenty of time now to reach the Lake before the hour set for the expedition to start. So once or twice, when beckoning lights twinkled their welcome in the farmhouse windows, he stopped for a brief talk and perhaps a refreshing drink or two, before setting out on the last lap of his journey.

It was good to see these people again. There was Amos Collender, John Crigo, Thomas Rowley, Elizah Kellogg and the Samuel Woolcotts, father and son. And they all responded to the summons and were among the gallant band that marched into the fort a few hours later.

It was well past midnight when the weary messenger reached the end of his sixty-four-mile journey at Hand's Cove, a secluded spot on the shore of Lake Champlain, two miles north of Fort Ticonderoga.

On the shore of this wooded cove he found Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold with two hundred and seventy men, all impatiently waiting for boats to carry them across the Lake. However, a large part of the company were doomed to disappointment since there were only enough boats to transport eighty-three of their number to the New York shore.

After a few hours rest Samuel crossed the lake in the vanguard and was among the immortal eighty-three who entered the fort at dawn when Ethan Allen demanded its surrender "in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress."

Sometime after Samuel Beach's death, in 1827, descriptions of his journey began to appear in print. Some of the writers, however, named Gershom Beach as the messenger; and so persistently has this error been repeated that today many readers of Vermont history are under the impression that it was Gershom, and not Samuel, who made the journey. However, there are a number of publications, including Robert O. Bascom's *Ticonderoga Expedition* and Child's *History of Addison County* which award the palm to Samuel. There are also several other narratives which state that the messenger was "Major Beach" and do not give the first name. The reasonable inference to be drawn from such an omission is that the writer meant Samuel, since the military records at Montpelier show that Samuel was a major and Gershom was a sergeant. Had they meant Gershom it is not likely they would have given him the title of major.

It appears from family records and other sources that Gershom was something of a "character." He seems to have been a convivial sort with rather a flair for the dramatic. He was also a teller of tall tales, some of which are still extant. Naturally this exuberance of spirit made him more conspicuous than the less ebullient Samuel; and it is not strange that the roistering father, and not the sedate son, should have been considered the hero of the exploit.

Another factor, and one which points to Samuel as the man, is that of age. Gershom was forty-seven at the time and Samuel twenty-three. Though there may have been middle-aged men who could have performed the feat, still it seems likely that as stamina and speed were the prime requisites, the arduous mission was entrusted to the younger man.

There seems to be a dearth of contemporary evidence as to which



man performed the feat. The repetitive statements of later historians that it was one or the other are merely hearsay and therefore unreliable, though, as in this instance, of cumulative effect. Repeated error, as we know, becomes legendary; and as the legend grows, it sometimes acquires the stature of an accepted historical fact.

However, while research has failed to reveal any contemporary proof that Gershom performed the deed, there are at least two reliable sources of evidence of this nature which authoritatively named Samuel as the actor. These statements impress one as being inherently authentic and true.

One of these sources of contemporary evidence is a newspaper account of the journey, dated Green Island, Sept. 10, 1869, and is here quoted in part: "Major Samuel Beach has two daughters residing in Whiting and they informed the writer that on that memorable time their father walked sixty-four miles in one day and the next day stood at the side of Allen when the fort was surrendered. One of the daughters, Mrs. Parker, has a pair of long silk stockings that he wore on that occasion."

The other source of contemporary evidence, and one which bears the palpable impress of truth, is the affidavit of two sisters, Mrs. Eva Cook of Shoreham and Mrs. Frank Bissell of Whiting. While both of these venerable ladies are approaching the century mark, their minds are clear and their memories of past events are good. Two years ago these ladies made statements in which they told of the nights, when as children, they gathered in the candlelight around their Aunt Delia Beach, daughter of Samuel Beach, and listened to the oft-repeated tale of her father's famous journey.

Conversely, while the writer has failed to find any affirmative contemporary evidence that Gershom made the journey, there is some recorded omissive evidence, so-called, which strongly indicates that he did not perform the deed.

This omissive or negative proof emanates from Gershom's home town, Salisbury. It is found in John W. Weeks' history of that town. The author of this local chronicle came to Salisbury in 1789, a few years before Gershom settled there, and, while he was younger than Beach, he must have known him. In Week's resumé of Gershom's creditable war record, he recites that he was present at Burgoyne's surrender, that he took part in the Battle of Hubbardton and was with Ethan Allen at Ticonderoga. But he says nothing about his having performed the deed in question. Yet, living as he did, in the same small settlement with Beach, it is almost certain that he would

have heard about it, if Gershom had performed this outstanding feat, and would have been quick to credit a neighbor with an exploit which overshadowed anything he actually did during the war. The writer informs us that Gershom died in 1812, and that he was buried in Salisbury.

Then, there is the sanction of a great name. In 1825, when Lafayette was in Vermont on his tour of America, he met Samuel Beach, and, having heard of his journey, he paid a graceful tribute to the old Green Mountain Boy. We again quote the Green Island correspondent and give the great Frenchman's actual words of praise. "I had heard of your patriotism and remarkable exploit before I left France, and when I shall return to my native country I shall feel proud to tell my countrymen that I have had the pleasure of seeing and shaking hands with the Green Mountain Boy who performed such a feat in the cause of American liberty."

Samuel Beach's exploit may have received as much notice at the time as did Paul Revere's Ride, but, like William Dawes who rode with Revere that night, he had no famous poet to sing him into fame. In his admirable *Life of Ethan Allen*, Stewart H. Holbrook, commenting on this feat and its lack of lyrical publicity, says: "If Longfellow had lived in Vermont, the Green Mountain State would possess a national character comparable to the Horseman of Boston."

Whatever may have been the extent of the public notice the deed received, it must have been brought to the attention of George Washington, as that august person presented Beach with a silk vest bearing his likeness in many places. If the feat had not been a conspicuous one, it is not likely that the head of the army would have heard of it and sent a token of his regard to an otherwise unknown soldier in the distant northern army. The vest is a cherished possession of a descendant, Beach Parker of Albany, New York.

Major Beach served in the army throughout the Revolutionary War, and at its close he settled in Whiting, where he became prominent in civil affairs. He was a member of the constitutional convention of 1791 and, when the state government was set up, he represented the town of Whiting in the Legislature. He also held the position of county surveyor and served on the committee that adjusted the boundary disputes with adjacent towns. Although he had only the common school educational advantages of the time, his extensive reading made him a well-informed man.

In the quiet village of Whiting, a few miles from the fort he helped to capture, in a grassy corner of the ancient churchyard,

sleeps the old soldier. The plain marble slab which marks his grave tells us simply of his birth and death and that he was an officer in the Revolutionary War. And though the ivy of fame may not grow upon his tomb, and the feet of the pilgrim seldom find their way to the little cemetery behind the old meeting-house, we may be sure that his rest is as sweet as that of more famous heroes whose deeds brighten the pages of history, for he acted well his part and more cannot be said of the most illustrious of men.

## 2. A COUNTRY FAIR ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

*You are invited to attend a country fair held in Williamstown, Vermont in October, 1858. We take the account, abridging it slightly, from the Green Mountain Freeman, published in Montpelier, December 30, 1858, by "Sidney S. Boyce, Editor, Aided by a corps of able Counsellors." Editor.*

### WILLIAMSTOWN AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

The Williamstown Agricultural Society held its first Annual Fair on the 6th and 7th days of October, 1858, to the general satisfaction, and much to the disappointment of the Society, and all who were in attendance; not that the show did not meet their expectations, but because it far exceeded the most sanguine hopes.

The first day was one of those days which far exceeds all others for beauty. The ground was dry, and the weather warm, much to the convenience of the vast multitude of visitors who were in attendance. At ten o'clock, fifty yoke of oxen met about half a mile north of the village and accompanied by the Barre Brass Band, and an excellent Martial Band gotten up for the occasion, passed through the village and was brought upon the ground, much to the admiration of the spectators. Soon after a dispatch was brought the Marshal that a long team of oxen from Brookfield were on the road. The Marshal, accompanied by the Band and a throng of spectators, met them a half mile south of the village. It was a splendid team of thirty yoke of extra red oxen. The wagon was fitted for the occasion, the body being thirty feet long and twelve feet wide, set with evergreen trees from ten to fifteen feet high, making a most magnificent and romantic appearance. The whole was under the charge and superintendence of S. Kingsbury, Esq., a most efficient Marshal. Escorting them through the village, they were brought upon the ground in good shape. On all sides now appeared one living mass of animals, from the ox of seven foot down to the sucking calf. There were some fine



specimens of Devon, Durham and Native Cattle. One fine Bull was exhibited by a farmer from Plainfield, a cross between the Devon and Creampot which it would be hard to beat. The exhibition of Cows was large, and many very nice. A lot presented by Lester Martin were excellent specimens of dairy cows. The show of Swine was not large, but some fine specimens of the Suffolk breed were exhibited by Septa Simons, which were much admired. There were some superior sheep on exhibition—one lot by E. Norton of Chelsea, which attracted much attention. The exhibition of brood Mares and Colts was large and very excellent. One mare and colt exhibited by Luther Wheatley of Brookfield, was decidedly meritorious. Many animals were presented for exhibition by persons not members of the Society, and by those not living in Williamstown, for which the Society tender their thanks.

#### FLORAL HALL

This Department of the Fair was declared by many persons present superior to that of either Washington or Orange County Fairs. The variety was large and the specimens good—such as farmers' wives and daughters are proud to exhibit. The specimens of fine needle-work and paintings were decidedly meritorious. Some very nice articles in this Department were presented by Mrs. Barnard and others who did not belong to the Society, for which they have our thanks.

#### VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

The exhibition of vegetables and fruit was immense, and the presumption is that it has never been equalled at any Fair in the State.

At two o'clock, a cavalcade of Horses was formed on the Common in front of the Congregational Church, and headed by the music, moved to the Trotting Course east of the village, and were drawn off into lines upon the Fair Ground, each class by itself, for the inspection of the several Awarding Committees, which took up the remainder of the afternoon.

Thursday morning did not look very promising. At ten o'clock it began raining, so that it soon put a stop to all out door business, so far as the Fair was concerned. It was announced by the Marshall that the address would be delivered in the Town Hall. There was then an instant rush for the Hall, and in fifteen minutes it was filled to a complete jam, and hundreds of gentlemen stood about the door intent on hearing what the Orator would have to say to them. At one o'clock the President introduced to the audience, the Hon.

Burnam Martin, Esq., of Chelsea, who then, in an off hand pleasing manner, spoke some half or three quarters of an hour, much to the satisfaction of all present.—After which the reports of the several Awarding Committees were declared by the Secretary.

Then a song by Miss Jane Smith, which held the crowd in perfect silence during the time of singing. The President then informed the visitors that the Society had nothing more to exhibit, and thanking them for their attendance declared the exhibition closed.

Much credit is due the Marshal and his aids, for the timely and thorough manner in which they performed the duties assigned them. Marshal Simons seemed to be perfectly at home, and completely master of his business.

#### REPORT OF THE AWARDING COMMITTEE

*[We are omitting the winners, forgotten long ago in the various classes, but the divisions have both human interest and historic value; so we are listing most of them. Editor.]*

Class 1.—Woodbury Morgan Horses. Class 2.—Sherman Morgan Horses. Class 3.—Bullrush Morgan Horses. Class 4.—Hamiltonians and Other Horses. Class 7.—Devon Cattle. Class 8.—Herfords and Durhams. Class 9.—Common Cattle. Class 10.—Merino Sheep. Class 11.—Long Wooled Sheep. Class 12.—Fowls. Class 13.—Dairy Butter and Cheese. Best ballèd butter. Best firkin butter. Class 14.—Swine. Class 15.—Sugar and honey. Class 16.—Fruit. Sour apples, sweet, plums, grapes. Class 17.—Vegetables. Potatoes, onions, beets, carrots, turnips, beans, squashes, cabbages. Class 18.—Mechanic Arts. Double wagon, buggy wagon, three sides upper leather, three calf skins, calf boots, thick boots, best sewing machine, best window curtain fixtures. Class 19.—Farming Implements. Best ox yoke and plows. Class 20.—*[The male member of the staff vanished at this point in this maze of female accomplishments a century ago, passing on with the unkind comment that nowhere today in a community the size of Williamstown or much larger are women with so many skills. Questions on this class should be directed to Miss Follette, Mrs. Nivens, or Mrs. Koier of the staff. Editor]* Best bed spread. Pencillings—Best flowers, landscape, black crayon heads, colored crayon heads, landscape, antique paintings, burr frame *[What is a “burr” frame? Editor]*, leather work, toilet cushion, tidy, crochet work, scarf, card basket, ornamental paintings, shell work, ottoman, hair work, Persian embroidery, tufted embroidery, lamp mat, muslin embroidery, slippers, linen embroidery.

Class 21.—Household Manufactures. Best toweling, braided rug, chenille rug, yarn rug, cotton and wool frocking, flannel, wool socks, rag carpeting, wool mittens, horse net, patch quilt.

[*Last paragraph—verbatim. Editor.*]

The Society, after looking over the proceedings of their Fair, can discover but few things for which to be sorry or ashamed. They are sorry and ashamed that a man crowded himself and wagon upon their grounds, and there, under an emblem of purity,\* dealt out, to all who were degraded enough to buy, that rotgut liquor, whereby they made themselves a complete nuisance among the sober part of the visitors. They regret that the Liquor Agent, for the town of Williamstown, did not have a little more regard for his own credit, and for the credit of the town, than to sell liquor at that time to all such as would use it, and thereby become intoxicated. They are also sorry that the Hotel-keeper in Williamstown should charge visitors such an extra price for their keeping.

\*This wagon, with a white top, was supposed to be from Randolph.







## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TOWN HISTORY

AN EDITORIAL *by* WALDO F. GLOVER

*Mr. Glover is the historian of the Groton, Vt., Town History Commission and is writing the history of that town. Editor.*

WHY is it that Vermont, in comparison with other New England states, has so few published town histories? For one thing, Vermont was the last state of this group to be settled by pioneers of English blood, and, therefore, lacks more than a century of colonial history. Moreover, the only towns that have any real Revolutionary or pre-Revolutionary history are those along the western border, principally the southwestern, and those along the Connecticut River as far north as Barnet and Peacham. The great majority of interior towns, especially in the northern half of the state, were not settled until after the Revolution, and many of them not until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Because of these facts it has gone without saying, at least until recent years, that a town has no history unless it can think back to the Revolution. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the earlier published histories were of the older "historic" towns, and that material on the younger, interior towns has been negligible. But time has wrought a change. Now, with the twentieth century half gone, all time before the year 1900 has become telescoped, especially to the rising generation who remember not the days when there were no radios, automobiles, or even telephones in general use. The great-great grandfather of 1850 seems as remote as Ethan Allen and Jacob Bayley; and the "doings" and folklore of his day are coming to be thought of as "historical" and worthy of preservation. And indeed they are.

It matters not that your town was not settled before the Revolution, or that a President was not born within its confines. It even matters not that the history of your town has little significance to readers outside your immediate region. At any rate the history of your town should be of concern to your own people. It is, moreover,

a part of the composite history of the state, without which that state history is incomplete. The question is, How can an interest in local history be stimulated, and what should be accomplished by those who have this interest at heart?

There probably is in every town some person who has a little better knowledge of the town's past than anybody else. He may even be recognized as the town "historian." This person should not hide his talent in the earth; he should see that others share his enthusiasm. A small group could constitute a local historical society. It would be desirable, of course, to have the official blessing of the town, even if no appropriation of funds was forthcoming. But lacking the cooperation of the town, or other local organizations, this society should embark on a definite program. In case there is no prospect of a published history in the near future, this society could have as its immediate project the collection of source material to be preserved against the day when the town, or some wealthy friend, could see fit to employ an historian to assemble the material for publication. And there should be no delay in the collection of this source material.

Of course, every town has its own record books; but there should be much in a town history that has never been recorded by a town clerk. This is especially important inasmuch as the keeping of vital records was not required in the early days. Before the "oldest inhabitant" goes the way of all the earth, he should be interviewed for his recollection of former times, and for his knowledge of early families; search should be made for old letters, diaries, notebooks and account books tucked away in attics; and vital records in family Bibles should be collected and preserved. We would be appalled to know what valuable records have been destroyed unwittingly, let us say since the year 1900. We are even given a twinge when we think how near priceless records have come to annihilation. Several instances could be given, but one will suffice.

George Mason of Ryegate spent years during the 1850's and '60's in collecting vital records of Ryegate families, and in interviewing elderly people for anecdotes and incidents of the early days of the town. This wealth of material he intended to use in the publication of a book; but at that time few people, if any, were interested in his project. Later he married a Groton widow, and went to that town to spend the remainder of his days. Soon after his death Edward Miller, also of Ryegate, who had long had an interest in the history of his native town, suddenly had an impulse to drive over to Groton to see what was to be done with Mr. Mason's valuable collection.

Upon arrival, so the story goes, he found the Mason papers thrown helter-skelter into a barrel and about to be taken to the dump for burning. Arranging for the purchase of the "junk," Mr. Miller took it home, and through the years added to it, intending, like Mason, to publish a book; but being a hard-working farmer, he never found time to put the material into satisfactory form for publication. Years later, when the town of Ryegate arranged for the publication of its town history, the Mason-Miller papers were generously handed over by the Miller family to Frederick Wells, the chosen editor, and became the basis of the *History of Ryegate*. When next you examine a copy of that excellent work, you should remember that the volume would not have been as large as it is, or as valuable, had not the thoughtful Edward Miller taken that timely trip to Groton.

Perhaps a local historical society might do for its own town what Edward Miller did for Ryegate.





## Folklore Department

*Edited by* LEON W. DEAN  
*President, Green Mountain Folklore Society*

### Just Wasn't

Deacon Blank was a good man, a pillar of the sanctuary, and possessed a keen sense of humor, although his neighbors called him "a little near." He lived in the days when every farmer had one or more yoke of oxen and steers and such animals brought good prices. One day an out-of-town farmer, hearing that the deacon had a yoke of oxen to sell, came to look at the cattle, which were slick and fat, and asked about their feed.

"I have kept them on straw all winter," said the deacon.

The purchaser drove away the oxen, and some weeks later happened to meet the deacon in a neighboring town. After greeting him rather coolly, he remarked:

"How did you keep them cattle on straw? I can't get them to eat a mouthful. How did you keep them on straw?"

"Knee deep," was the deacon's reply.

On another occasion he owned a yoke of oxen very poorly mated. In praising them to a prospective buyer, he said:

"This nigh ox is as good an ox as I ever owned, and I don't know why the other ox is not just as good."

The oxen were bought on that recommendation, but were quite unsatisfactory. Later the buyer complained to the deacon that the off ox was nearly worthless, although he agreed that the other was all right.

"The nigh ox is willing to do all the work, and the off ox is willing that he should."

"I told you," said the Deacon, "that the nigh ox is as good an ox as I ever owned and that I did not know why the off ox was not just as good. I don't know why he ain't, but he ain't. No, sir, he ain't."<sup>1</sup>





## “Drive On”

An indigent but proud old fellow in the town of Lowell is said to have decided to starve to death rather than ask for help.

After several days his neighbors found him and reported his condition to the authorities, and it was arranged that he should be taken to the Poor Farm.

As he was too weak to sit up, a bed of straw was made in the back of a pung, and he was placed on it for the dreaded ride.

On the way, the pung passed the post office, which was the visiting center of the town, and the driver stopped to chat with the loafers. Pity was aroused among them when they learned that their old neighbor was really going to the Poor Farm.

“It seems a shame to take him there,” said one of them. “I’ve got plenty of corn that I’ll let him have.”

The old man raised up on his elbow. “Is it husked?” he asked.

“No,” replied the friend.

“Drive on,” said the old man.<sup>2</sup>



## An Early Home

*[This is an exact copy of a record written by William Scott of his grandfather, Lemuel Scott, who was the first settler in Fletcher. The original script was borrowed from Mrs. Fannie Spaulding of Cambridge. Lack of punctuation is due to the fact that there was little in the original.— Evelyn S. Irish, Underhill.]*

I will write a little more as it may interest you and be a change. My grandfather took his ax on his shoulder and started for his later home on foot the distance was about 160 miles the greater part of the way was by marked trees. Came by way of Burlington at this time the city had 3 log cabins on what is now called the battery the first white man to settle here was Felix Powell in 1773 the next year he purchased a tract of land 103 acres on apple tree point built a log cabin did not stay long removed to Manchester, Vt. His cabin and the others constituted the town then. From Burlington Lemuel Scott followed marked trees for a road and in due time he came to the farm where you in the youthful days of the writer took cart loads of apples to the cider mill my grandfather Seth Scott used to run. Well as I said this was the farm where grandfather settled in 1778 all a primitive forest. He cut the trees a little way from where the

old cider mill stands and built a log cabin of logs also a barn as boards and shingles were not in vogue he found hollow basswood trees and then split them in halves turned them hollow side up side by side then turned the upper side down for the upper covering and had a tight roof as far as leaking went. He lived there alone during this season burned the refuse logs and brush dug up between the stumps raised a crop of corn harvested it in the fall and started for Bennington to see his 20 year old wife and baby boy of a year or so old. Of course he got there not as quick as we today could. When winter came he yoked up his 3 year old steers hitched them to a sled loaded his household goods and the fodder for his cattle on the way set a sugar tub on as a seat for the young wife and baby boy and started. He got there in due time it took many days but he had provided a home as stated. What would the girls of today say to such a home? in the center of the cabin there was a stump used as a table and sometimes the washtub was turned upside down on the table. The little stone fireplace he had provided warmed the house had no windows only a greased paper bed blanket for a door. In 1800 he built the house where I was born there were 9 boys and girls came to this house and all lived to maturity and old age.



## Short Summer

An elderly native of Buck Hollow, just outside of Fairfield, is talking to a visitor. It's mid-winter and the drifts are piled deep and the stormy winds do blow. Both characters are well muffled up.

"I understand," the visitor is saying, "that you have a very short summer here."

"Yup," says the old-timer, "sure do. Last year it was on a Thursday."<sup>3</sup>



## Interesting Inventory

*[Mrs. Bessie Reynolds has in her possession a very interesting inventory made in the year 1859 of the furniture and utensils used in the Grand Isle Methodist parsonage of that year.—Mildred L. Horican, Grand Isle.]*

1 book case, writing table and drawers; 4 bedsteads (bed) with cords; 1 bureau—21 chairs—3 tables, one has a leg broken off; 1 light and one wash stand with wash bowl and pitcher; 1 cook stove—2 box stoves—sink; 1 tea and one dish kettle and iron heater,

shovel and tongs; 1 spider and griddle; 2 brass kettles; 1 wash tub; 1 looking glass; 1 meat barrel; 1 flour barrel; 1 soap tub; 1 wood saw & sawhorse; 1 axe; 1 pitch fork; 1 old lantern with lamp; 2 wooden bowls; 2 lamps; 2 carpets for parlor and bed-room; 2 smoothing irons; 5 paper window curtains; 4 pails; 4 baking tins; 1 coffee pot.

#### CROCKERY

1 jug, 2 jars, 1 teapot, 1 cream-cup and sugar-bowl, 21 plates, 4 teacups, 26 saucers, 10 sauce plates, 2 bowls, 9 knives and 6 forks, 1 tumbler.

Dr. Jackson has 4 joints of 7 inch stovepipe.

Earl Kinsley has 3—7 inch elbows belonging to the parsonage.

Grand Isle, May 27th 1859

J. S. Mott.

The old shovel, hoe and milk pans are not worth naming.

April the 24th 1860.

The above inventory returned by Seth Butles

Guy Reynolds Comity



### How Be Yuh?

I never remember hearing my grandfather say, "Hello." Knowing he was born in 1840, I asked Mother what his greeting to people was and if she had ever heard him say "Hello" in greeting. She said she never had heard him use "Hello," but that his greeting to all who came was always, "How be yuh?" And it was always "be," never "are." When he greeted someone he knew, and liked, the words were warm and friendly, but if he addressed a stranger or someone he had no particular liking for, the words were noncommittal. The way they were spoken made all the difference in the meanings, which could be worlds apart.<sup>4</sup>



### Old Fashioned Boiled Dinner

*This was often served during the winter when all the vegetables that had been raised on the farm were stored in the cellar.*

A large piece of lean corned beef, one large piece of lean salt pork.

Score the beef and pork and put in a large kettle and cook until well done. Add the following well washed vegetables.

2 large cabages, cut in wedges

2 large turnips, sliced

12 good-sized carrots

2 quarts of potatoes

Cook until well done. Then put meat on a large platter, and surround with the vegetables.<sup>5</sup>



## Folklore Pharmacopoeia

Spit on a wart and it will disappear.

For sore throat put around your neck a wool stocking which you have been wearing.

Nanny goat droppings, steeped and drunk, will bring out measles.

Steep snakes' heads for dysentery.

Bottled angleworms, hung in the sun until they form oil, are good for ringworm.

Angleworms steeped, with sugar added, are good for coughs.

Peeled cucumbers will relieve mosquito bites, nettle stings, and other forms of itching.

To stop nosebleed squeeze a puffball under the nose.

For worms or convulsions burn feathers under the patient's nose.

Burn shoes or other kinds of leather under the nose of a horse which has distemper.<sup>6</sup>



## Sheep Days

There used to be huge sheep sales held each fall at the Barton Fair Ground. I recall attending one of the last, if not the last, of them, probably around 1877. There must have been several thousand



sheep driven into the pens. I have no recollection of the prices received. The most interesting thing to me were the Merino rams, with huge horns and many wrinkles. My folks had only coarse wool sheep, while many, if not most, of the sheep at this sale were fine wool Merinos.

My father, whom I do not remember, as he died when I was a year old, was the champion sheep shearer of the section and had a record of shearing one hundred sheep in one day. He and his helper left the house at three in the morning to shear a flock of sheep on Beckwith Mountain in the town of Sutton, where he lived at that time. They drove the sheep—one hundred in the flock—into a pen at one side of the pasture, and Father went to shearing, his helper catching the sheep and doing up the wool. When they left the pasture at dark that night, the whole flock was sheared. I never became an expert shearer, three sheep an hour being my best time with shears, but with a shearing machine, turned by hand, I have sheared a sheep in six minutes, which is not a record by any means. My father must have averaged about fifteen minutes to a sheep as his usual pace.

We used to cut small balsam fir trees and haul them into the sheep yard for the sheep to browse on during the winter. They not only ate the leaves and smaller twigs but also gnawed off the bark, stripping a tree five inches in diameter at the butt in a few days.

The old rams used to be rather unpleasant to meet unexpectedly, and my grandfather told of being attacked once by a cross ram out in the open pasture. He finally took refuge behind a big log, and when the ram tried to butt him he caught the animal by the horns and bumped his nose on the log till the blood ran freely. Thereafter he was immune from attack by that particular ram as long as his folks kept the animal. I found a light trace-chain a very good protection, and used it on occasion.<sup>7</sup>



## Ancestral Ways

Pearlash was super-refined potash, and was used as soda is today.<sup>8</sup>

The Indians dressed their deerskins by soaking them in a paste made of brains, and then rubbing them and drying them in the smoke.<sup>9</sup>

My grandmother's family made preserves, raspberry and blackberry and wild strawberry. They used sugar, pound for pound, with

fruit, put the preserves in stone jars and used them only for company.<sup>10</sup>

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Sweet pickles were placed in stone jars and horseradish leaves were placed over the top to keep them from spoiling.<sup>11</sup>

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To preserve sausage or fresh pork chops fry the meat and place in a crock. Seal with a covering of lard.<sup>12</sup>

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## Pound Parties

In the good old days one would have needed a spyglass to see the minister's salary, but the town's people did try to make up for the lack of money they couldn't pay him by having what they called Pound Parties.

Word was sent about the neighborhood, and on the date set the people of the parish met at the parsonage, each bringing a pound of something for the minister's larder.

It might be a pound of butter, lard, sugar, tea or whatever they could best afford. In that way many an early preacher's larder was replenished.

Refreshments would be served and an evening of fun and frolic enjoyed by all.<sup>13</sup>

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## Autographs—1877 Vintage

You are handsome,  
You are witty;  
You are single—  
What a pity!

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Some love one,  
Some love two;  
I love one,  
And that is you.

---

May you ever live happy  
And live at your ease,  
And have a good man  
To kiss when you please.

Fall from the topmast to the deck,  
Fall from the house top and break your neck,  
Fall from the gentle skies above,  
But never fall in love with—

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If ere a husband you should get,  
And he these lines should see,  
Tell him of your school days,  
And kiss him twice for me.

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War and love are strange compeers,  
War sheds blood and love sheds tears;  
War has swords, love has darts;  
War breaks heads, and love breaks hearts.<sup>14</sup>

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### Skeptical

The old man had never traveled more than forty miles from his little farm. He was hearing for the first time of the rotation of the earth. The more he heard, the more he doubted. Finally, in a tone which should have ended such nonsense for all time, he exclaimed:

“B’Gard, ye can’t make me believe that! Why, if this world turned round like they say it does, my little farm would be over in Les Smith’s holler with Bristol Pond on top of it!”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Amos J. Eaton, So. Royalton <sup>2</sup>Irene C. Scott, Montgomery <sup>3</sup>Gene M. Ladeau, St. Albans <sup>4</sup>and <sup>5</sup>Loretta R. Potter, Enosburg Falls <sup>6</sup>Bernece Clark, Enosburg Falls <sup>7</sup>Amos J. Eaton <sup>8</sup>Ruth Atkinson, West Brattleboro <sup>9</sup>Carol Wheatley, Burlington <sup>10</sup>Ethel E. Harvey, Hyde Park <sup>11</sup>Evelyn S. Irish, Underhill <sup>12</sup>Ethel E. Harvey <sup>13</sup>Mildred L. Horican, Grand Isle <sup>14</sup>Clara D. Cross, Grand Isle <sup>15</sup>Ethel M. Thayer, Brattleboro.

## Meetin' Seed Bags

I send to you my Christmas greetin'—  
A little bag to take to meetin'.  
If the sermon makes you wiggle  
Or if you feel inclined to giggle,  
Seek a moment quite auspicious  
And with movements surreptitious,  
In this bag your fingers dibble,  
To your lips convey a nibble.  
When Parson talks of Balaam's ass  
Calmly chew on sassafras,  
When your thoughts begin to rove,  
Try a little taste of clove.  
When your interest doth lag  
Munch a piece of spicy flag.  
If the sermon stirs your dander,  
Calm yourself with coriander,  
Slipp'ry elm will stop your cough,  
Horehound, better, heads it off.  
Try snakeroot when inclined to hiss  
Or bite a piece of licorice.  
Coltsfoot, when you wish to kick  
Is better than to throw a brick.  
Solemn thoughts won't make you glum  
If you are braced with cardamom.  
Lovage heals each conscience prick,  
But sometimes it will make you sick.  
Just a little bit of candy  
Keeps you feeling fine and dandy.  
Our Grandmas found these really work  
To add to pleasure in the kirk!

*Annette C. Dimock*

## The Underground Railroad 1840-1865

Purple-black welts on his sweat-washed back,  
Moaning and groaning in his slave-pen shack,  
Shaking like an aspen in his slave-man fear  
At the brimstone curses of his overseer—  
Hearing in his sleep the bloodhound's cry  
And the witch-man a-whistling for him to die



Till he heard the distant tremor and the shuffling sound  
Of flat, black feet on the underground.

*Lawd, Lawd-A-Mighty! Hear dat freedom sound!  
Hear dem glad hosannas on de underground.*

Yes, he listened to the voices of the underground  
Till his ears were a-humming with that freedom sound . . .  
O, come along Rastus, come along Mose  
And the underground will take you where the underground goes,  
North through the mountains, north through the swale  
To the underground stations on the underground trail.  
You creep through the dark-time and you sleep through the day  
So Ole Massa can't catch you if he hunts that way.

*Lawd Gawd-A-Mighty! Hear dem bloodhounds bay!  
Hear dem feet a-poundin' down de underground-way!*

You will hide out at Jenkins on the River Road,  
And Barrows he will bed you in his log abode,  
And Simpson he will feed you from his grounden grist,  
He's a Vermont miller and Abolitionist.  
Yes, the freedom folks'll hide you in your freedom dash  
From the black man's voo-doo and the white man's lash,  
And the Lord will be waving with his golden crown  
And all the twelve Apostles will be grinning down.

*Great God-A-Mighty! What a holy sight!  
De Lawd and his Disciples all in gleamin' white.*

Don't you fear the lashes or the whipping-post;  
Don't you fear old voodoo or white Massa's ghost;  
Don't you fear the Devil with his pitchfork tail,  
For Saint Peter he is watching on the Freedom Trail.  
Yes, Saint Peter he is watching with a Vermont throng;  
You can hear them now a-singing of the Glory song;  
So steal your freedom ticket and be northward bound  
On the slave-man's railroad of the underground.

*Lawd, Lawd-A-Mighty! Watch de bonds fall free  
When Saint Peter springs de shackles with his golden key!*

*Morris Wilcox*



## Postscript

*"Those who do not know the errors of the past are compelled to repeat them."*—AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

My suggestion in an earlier Postscript that the distaff side of our membership might be interested in the old recipes of our foremothers and that an article listing some of the old recipes might be useful led to comments from our feminine readers that "scared me off." First of all, I was warned that the old word was "receipts" not "recipes"—a fact that I knew, but in debating what to "call 'em," I used "recipes." Then I was told I would be a "villain" if I printed certain "receipts" as old Vermont ones. The truism is simple: a man not gifted in culinary matters should keep out of a kitchen and its mysterious lore—and out I go until I can find some wise substitute willing to venture in.

However, the Rev. Vincent B. Maloney, librarian of St. Michael's College, a Curator and ever loyal member, sent in one "recipe" which I proudly present in his words:

I am no cook myself, but I know good bread (among other things) when I taste it. There is a recipe for Irish Bread (also known as Currant Bread) which has been a favorite with the Maloney clan and with their kith and kin for at least three or four generations; the recipe was imported from Ireland with the family.

Any cook who can make bread can make this Irish Bread, using her (or his) [*? Editor*] recipe. Lacking that, I would suggest the recipe for Homemade Bread (Yeast Method) given on page 135-136 in Louis P. De Gouy's most excellent book, *The Bread Tray* (New York, Greenberg, Publisher, 1944, and still in print, list price \$4.50.)

Recipe for Irish Bread: Begin as for regular white bread; add a box of dried currants to the flour while dry. To the liquid add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of dark molasses and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of brown sugar or maple sugar, as preferred. Bake slowly after the first few minutes as it burns quite easily. Bake an hour or longer in a slow oven. N.B. As the dough will be heavier than regular white bread dough, it rises more slowly; hence, it is well to use more yeast than for regular white bread.

When the baking is finished, you have bread that smells delicious, looks delicious, and is delicious!

All the above sounds enigmatic to me, but the Lady Who Knows How to Cook tried the recipe for me, and I second Father Maloney's motion!

Perhaps I am on safer ground with this "recipe" for a "A Lady's Toilet," taken from a battered old fragment of a newspaper published in 1819: "The following are humbly recommended as necessary requisites for a lady's toilet: . . . A fine eye-water, *benevolence* . . . best white paint, *innocence* . . . a mixture giving sweetness to the voice, *mildness and truth* . . . a wash to prevent wrinkles, *contentment* . . . best rouge, *modesty* . . . a pair of the most valuable ear-rings, *attention* . . . an universal beautifier, *good humor* . . . a lip salve, *cheerfulness*."

\* \* \*

One of the questions haunting the Vermont historian has to do with the emigration of Vermonters to northern New York—who were they, what did they accomplish? Why did they leave Vermont? Luckily, in recent years, Watson B. Berry (VHS) [414 West 118th St., New York] has been doing exceptionally fruitful research in answer to that question. His articles have been appearing in the *Watertown* (N.Y.) *Daily Times* under such titles as "While Reading History, One is impressed by Debt North Country Owes Vermont" and "Vermonters Played An Important Role In Forming History of North Country," "List of Vermonters Settling in North Grows; Prominent Individuals Recalled." Stewart H. Holbrook's excellent *The Yankee Exodus* overlooked this phase of emigration from Vermont, and Mr. Berry's study should fill the hiatus. It is possible that the final study will appear in book form.

\* \* \*

Alert readers are an asset to any publication, and we find some of our members following closely in our footsteps as we try to shape some of the history of the past. Their good work in calling attention to some of our missteps is appreciated also. A number of such readers reminded us that the "Lost: A Legend of Vermont" by Julia Gile [April 1951 *Quarterly*] was merely another version of the old Margaret Gray tale—and an interesting one. Since the author states at the end of her version that the tale "descended" from an ancestor of hers who was the third child born in Rockingham, I hoped some reader might be led to see if the clue could be traced to its end. We have not been successful here. Also, the legend was taken from a scrapbook of old newspaper clippings, dating back to 1865. The ballad as sung in the version printed in Flanders' *Folk Songs and Ballads*—no longer in print—appeared in print about one hundred years after the supposed event. Mrs. Julia C. R. Dorr's version, "Margery Gray—A Legend of Vermont," appeared in 1872. As we happened

to be general editor of the volume edited by Mrs. Flanders, we knew, of course, about the "Margery Gray" version. One of our members living near the old town of Rockingham wrote that she and a friend were determined to "do away" with the old legend. As well try to do away with a long-established fairy story, but we do hint gently that it would be fun to keep the search alive until the original event which has inspired a long series of versions is possibly found. There are many old tales of pioneer women vanishing among the "monstrous" trees, but this one incident must have had wide appeal if it really happened. What was the original incident?

\* \* \*

Our picture of the State House, drawn by Mr. Edward Sanborn (VHS) is very familiar to our Vermont members; but so many requests have been coming from members outside of the state that I decided to have it appear in permanent form in their files of *Quarterlies*. I have not at the moment been able to locate the reference, but I am sure that John Gunther referred to the State House as the most beautiful of state capital buildings. From our office we can glance up and see hosts of tourists photographing it, and it must go into thousands of homes and albums as a symbol of the serenity of Vermont and its quiet security in an insecure world.

\* \* \*

We are using a few of our historic mountains as frontispieces, partly because we feel that our members would like to have such pictures on file, partly because the mountains symbolize the inner moods of the state's history. These mountains have entered, in a way impossible to assess, the souls of men through generations. The father of a G.I. who received the Congressional Medal of Honor was asked to explain the young soldier's heroism, and the father is quoted as saying, "He was born in the mountains, wasn't he?" The mountains we picture give meaning, we hope, to much of the text in our *Quarterly* pages.

\* \* \*

"Vermont at Bull Run" by William R. Folsom (VHS) drew gracious praise, not only from readers who knew little about the battle, but also from experts on that action. He writes as effectively, we believe, of the dramatic and colorful battle of Valcour Island. He is a resident of Chicago, but his summer home is on South Hero Island, where his name is beloved in the community. Like many other summer residents we are glad to number among our members,



he is truly a Vermonter in the finest sense of the word. Wellington E. Aiken (VHS), for many years an outstanding member of the English Department of the University of Vermont, a skilled teacher and sympathetic writer with the sure equipment of the scholar who is essentially a humanist at heart, fashioned his account of his native town, Benson, as a sesquicentennial address given there in 1933. We commend it as a model to follow to anyone who is preparing a brief history of any town. Mr. Karl S. Brong (VHS), who enters the Gershom-Samuel Beach controversy with his discerning paper, is a native of Lockport, N. Y. He is the author of both biographical and historical material. His mother's father lived in Whiting, then came to Lockport in the early days of the newly built Erie Canal. Morris Wilcox, a gifted writer of ballads on Vermont historical themes, is a native of Burlington.

\* \* \*

"Meetin' Seed Bags" will, no doubt, in these days of twenty-minute sermons and golf in the afternoon on Sunday, not appeal to our younger-generation readers, but those of us who recall the long sermons and services and the delight of having something to munch as the long minutes drawled by, will certainly enjoy the poem—and with it will come memories of the sound of voices long stilled and a faith insistent that God is in His Heaven and all is right with the world. The author is Mrs. Julian A. Dimock of Bradford, the beloved Aunt Serena of the "Letters to Peggy" which were for many years a feature of the *Burlington Free Press*. For the benefit of her wide array of fans, we are glad to say that we have procured from Mrs. Dimock by requests that gradually rose to reasonably polite demands the letters that appeared in the *Free Press*. They may be seen but not borrowed by those wishing to recall the fun, the wisdom, the reflection of vital years in Vermont's past decades as seen through intelligent and understanding eyes—and there are the famous recipes, too!

\* \* \*

The story of Peter Kalm has perennial interest for the scholar; and in recent years that interest has broadened among general readers to whom the early history of America is appealing. The Swedish Academy of Science was founded in 1739, and one of its first proposals was to send a scientist to countries from which data could be gathered that would be useful in promoting agriculture and industry in Sweden. Peter Kalm was selected because he was believed to possess—as later events showed that he did possess—just the right

qualities for such an adventure. In 1748, he came to America, landing in Philadelphia. His various journeys in the colonies brought him finally to Lake Champlain. Blessed with an urbane temperament, a sound scientific point of view, and remarkable powers of observation, he was equipped to see the pioneer regions with understanding eyes, and his descriptive and clear expository style of writing has made his records of his trips fascinating reading. The pages we selected for our readers are taken from a two-volume edition—Peter Kalm's *Travels In North America* by Adolph B. Benson, Wilson-Erickson, Inc., New York, 1937—which we consider the best edition known to us.

\* \* \*

Stewart H. Holbrook (VHS) under the title, "My Grandfather Was an Accessary after the Fact," tells most entertainingly in *The American Scholar* [Vol. 20, No. 1] the story of his discovery that his mother's father had "taken an active and risky part in one of the most celebrated kidnapping cases in nineteenth-century America." His grandfather was Edward A. Stewart, judge of probate in Newport, Vermont, where Holbrook was born. He found his information about the case—readers please note—in his grandmother's scrap-books!

Charles Rice, living in Nahant, Mass., was kidnapped by his mother in a sensational affair. Five days later, the lad in the company of his mother and two other women, were in Stanstead Plain, Province of Quebec, coming by carriage from Boston. Derby Center began to swarm with agents of the father. The mother was told to get in touch with a John Kelley in Derby Center. Holbrook's grandfather had married Lucy Jane, sister of Kelly. The boy was hustled to another Kelly's home with the father and his detectives warm on the trail. In the end the grandfather hid the boy under the seat of a country doctor's buggy, and the long journey to Portland was made safely; thence, the mother and her son sailed for Germany.

\* \* \*

The quiet undertows that flow under the surface of American life seem to escape many observers who are busy with surface events, their color and drama. It seems to me that those of us more or less concerned with history and its significance sense without question, even if we cannot accurately chart, the emergence of an interest in history today as a meaningful undercurrent that is reaching more and more into American experience—not with much sound or foam

but deep-flowing. Perhaps because "the past is at least secure," minds are turning to that security which in essence is based on the winnowed wisdom of centuries, and from that wisdom we may in time come to learn a more confident way of planning for the future. Out of such wisdom carefully garnered by devoted hands may come vision—

*I am in love with high, far-seeing places  
That look on plains half sunlight and half storm*

—and the confusing plains may become sunlit, with storms merely a memory.

A.W.P.





## GENERAL INFORMATION

*Membership in the Society is open to any individual or institution.*

### AIMS AND PURPOSES

THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, founded one hundred and twelve years ago, is the *official historical society* of the State of Vermont. Housed in the State Library Building at Montpelier, it maintains a Library, Reading-Room, the State Museum, and furnishes a wide range of services to the State and individuals through its staff. It publishes scholarly and general books of lasting value; its rich collections contain priceless material for the study of community, state, and national history; it serves as headquarters for the local historical societies of the State. It also functions as an educational institution, seeking to promote the study of history in both popular and research phases. Its aims are to preserve for the future valuable relics, data, and documents, to emphasize an understanding of history as an asset to the people of the State, including its youth, as an approach to the problems of man in his relation to society, and as a method of clarifying the permanent values that underlie achievement in human experience. The Society is supported in part by appropriations of the General Assembly, but the major part of its necessary income is drawn from private gifts, contributions, endowments, and membership fees. Its affairs are under the direct control of representatives of the State, *ex officio*, and a Board of Curators who are recognized leaders in professional and business fields.

### CLASSES OF MEMBERSHIP

*Names and addresses of possible members are given prompt attention.*

**LIFE MEMBERSHIPS.** \$100. No annual dues. Includes subscription to the official magazine of the Society, *The Vermont Quarterly*, a monthly publication, the *V.H.S. News and Notes*, and a free copy of every book published by the Society after the receipt of the dues and during the member's lifetime.

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of the  
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MONTPELIER, VERMONT

Books listed below may be ordered directly at the price indicated. Members of the Society are given a 10 per cent discount on any volume.

1. *The Capture of Ticonderoga* by Lucius Chittenden. Documents, notes. 172 pp. \$1.50
2. *Biography of Thomas Davenport, Inventor of the Electric Motor* by W. R. Davenport. Illus. Index. 165 pp. \$3.00
3. *Vermonters* by D. B. E. Kent. Famous Vermonters, their birthplaces, their records. 187 pp. \$1.50
4. *The Upper Connecticut: Narratives of its Settlement and its Part in the Revolution*. 2 vols. 300 pp.; 286 pp. (\$2.25 per vol.) \$4.50
5. *The Story of a Country Medical College; a History of the Clinical School of Medicine and The Vermont Medical College, Woodstock, Vermont 1827-1856* by F. C. Waite. Illus. 213 pp. \$4.50
6. *Vermont During the War for Independence . . . Being Three Chapters from the Author's Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, published in 1794, by Samuel Williams. 104 pp. Wrappers. \$1.25
7. *People of Wallingford* by B. C. Batcheller. 328 pp. \$3.00
8. *History of Londonderry* by A. E. Cudworth. 228 pp. \$3.00
9. *History of Marlborough* by E. H. Newton. 330 pp. \$3.50
10. *History of Barnard* by W. M. Newton. 2 vols. 879 pp. Illus. Folding Maps. \$6.00
11. *History of Pomfret* by H. H. Vail. 2 vols. 687 pp. Illus. Folding Maps \$5.00
12. *List of Pensioners of the War of 1812* by B. N. Clark. \$1.50
13. *Vermont Imprints Before 1800* by Elizabeth F. Cooley. 133 pp. \$1.50
14. *Heads of Families: Second Census of the United States: 1800. The State of Vermont*. Folio, 233 pp. \$3.00
15. *The First Medical College in Vermont. Castleton 1818-1862* by Frederick Clayton Waite. 280 pp. 13 ill. Catalog of graduates and non-graduates. Index. \$5.00.

THE annals of a predominately agricultural town make no dramatic narrative. They are written, no less significantly, in the soil—in ridges of old plowed fields long since reverted to pasture or woodland, in logs of corduroy roads rotting in old swamps, gnarled old apple trees clustered around half-filled cellar holes in the woods; in old ox yokes and ox shoes, wheat cradles, wool cards, and spinning wheels; in weather-beaten gray barns with twenty-inch timbers in the frame as firm as a hundred years ago; in chairs and tables without a nail or drop of glue which laugh to scorn the gim-crack furniture of the mail-order trade. These things are the record of hard-working generations who built Vermont. Not less is the heritage of character implanted by the labors of our church-going fathers; by hours spent at the whittled desks in bare old schoolhouses; by earnest thought and loud argument of generations that took their politics as seriously as their religion; by unselfish service of school district, town and church; and the unpretentious neighborliness in days of birth and sickness and death.

Surely above these fields a spirit broods  
A sense of many watchers hovering near  
By the mown meadows and the quiet woods,  
Loved to the death, inestimably dear.

WELLINGTON E. AIKEN